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University of Glasgow

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Centre for the Study of Literature, Theology and the Arts

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## Hans-Georg Gadamer: The Rediscovery of Truth

For My Mother and Father

## **Acknowledgements**

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**AM**

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## Preface

When the first publication of Hans-Georg Gadamer's magnum opus *Wahrheit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*) came to life in 1960, the work was initially received with a slight sense of puzzlement and yet concurrently acknowledged as monumental. The title, in English, *Truth and Method*, was regarded by the philosophical community both in Germany and abroad as being somewhat obscure, as Gadamer himself would later admit,<sup>1</sup> but the ingeniousness of the book's content could hardly be debated. Since its initial publication, *Truth and Method* has respectively helped to expand and light up the horizon of modern hermeneutics by provoking, at once, a reconsideration of the phenomenon of understanding while, at the same time, enlivening the debate over scientific methodology and its exclusive claim to truth.

The central aim of the present thesis has been to focus on Part I of *Truth and Method*, concentrating primarily on the 'guiding humanistic concepts' and the experience of truth in art, to clarify Gadamer's understanding of truth and to shed new light as to how the experience of truth is to be grasped in relation to the human sciences, i.e. the humanities. The humanistic concepts, I believe, are vital to understanding the experience of truth. One reason, which leads me to this conclusion, is that in *Truth and Method* Gadamer begins his philosophical undertaking with the elucidation of the humanistic concepts rather than with a direct exposition of truth. By opening with the humanistic concepts, Gadamer seems to demonstrate subtly the phenomenological and ontological nature of knowledge and understanding. The outcome of this manoeuvre is that one comes to realise that truth does not simply belong to method and that it is not something which can be defined solely as 'absolute certainty'. Moreover, in my interview with Professor Gadamer, the humanistic concepts, he explained to me, are the most 'natural' and 'original' concepts. By natural and original, he means that these concepts are intrinsic. They evolve from life as well as being a part of life, i.e. a way of living. Thus these concepts, he affirmed, represent 'a way of life' and a way to truth. Consequently, insofar as comprehending the phenomenon of truth, I believe any and every investigation of the concept of truth must begin with the understanding of the humanistic tradition.

The following thesis however does not end simply with the humanistic concepts. It also devotes to examining the truth-claim or the 'truth-experience' of art. This part of the

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<sup>1</sup> See "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey" in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. (Ed. Lewis E. Hahn. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1997.), p. 17.

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inquiry centres on two important questions: (1.) How are we to understand art? (2.) What does it mean to experience art? The challenge here has been to show how Gadamer overcomes Kant's subjectivation of the aesthetic experience and to demonstrate how and why Gadamer considers the experience of art as the 'self-presentation' of being.

In surveying the various works of criticism I have tried to draw attention to what seem to me to be the most insightful comments and analyses. If I have failed in any way to supply proper acknowledgement to ideas, which might seem close to other critical works, I offer my apologies. As I am sure those in the research business know well, in reflection ideas often interfuse with one's own, making it difficult sometimes to discriminate between one's own ideas from another's. However, I have tried my best to keep from that error.

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What is 'truth'? How do we in our time understand the concept of truth? Is truth what is exclusively opened to the 'exact sciences', i.e. the natural sciences, and accessible only through rigorous scientific method? If so, how are we to think about and understand the variety of knowledge-claims that exist beyond scientific exactitude and methodological procedure? Are we simply to deem these knowledge-claims as irrelevant and abandon them since they possess no 'truth', or do we accept them as lesser knowledge-claims with minimal significance? Or better yet, can we nevertheless understand them simply as equals to scientific knowledge? And what if we consider that the phenomenon of truth is neither confined nor restricted to the so-called 'objective sciences', what happens then? Do we not undermine all accepted standards of truth and objectivity (as determined by the modern sciences) if we stretch the possibility of 'truth happening' into the domain of the 'lifeworld' (*Lebenswelt*)? If not, how are we to access those truth-claims in the interpretive disciplines, such as art, history, literature and philosophy, which transcend the realm of the natural sciences? Do we continue to employ the reputable 'scientific method' to secure and guarantee their truth-claims, or are there other possible avenues, independent of method, to realise an experience of truth? And finally, what does it mean, if anything at all, to have an experience of truth? In his magnum opus *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik* Hans-Georg Gadamer offers a fascinating attempt to unravel these profound and challenging questions which have perplexed Western thought since its very beginning. With rich philosophical thoroughness, he presents a heterogeneous exposition of truth which consists of an intriguing critique of culture that offers a unique rethinking of concepts, such as 'prejudice', 'authority', 'tradition' and 'language' as well as a sophisticated review of modern aesthetic theory – Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) in particular – and of historical understanding, which have developed gradually since the age of Enlightenment. But also central to Gadamer's treatise is Martin Heidegger's 'hermeneutics of facticity', sometimes referred to as 'hermeneutic phenomenology'. In fact, it can be said without exaggeration that Gadamer discovers in Heideggerian thought the necessary structural foundation and the conceptual tools for formulating his own 'philosophical hermeneutics'.

### **The Claim for Hermeneutic Truth beyond the Parameters of Method**

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer begins from the standpoint that there is truth beyond the 'sciences' and argues explicitly that experiences of truth can neither be left to the

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modern sciences to be discovered nor synthetically limited to the sphere of scientific study, since such events are intertwined and diffused into the very fabric of 'Being'. In his view the understanding of truth, with which our modern time has become acquainted, has been artificially narrowed, especially since the age of Cartesian rationalism, to denote something that is wholly 'absolute', i.e. possessing 'atemporal certainty', and that which can solely be discovered through scientific method. This perception of truth, Gadamer explains, was dramatically fostered in the eighteenth century by the analytic tradition of German Idealism, which found its point of departure in the Kantian critiques. Since then, the phenomenon of truth as 'absolute knowing', to use Hegel's phrase, became strictly monopolised by the modern sciences and thought to be acquired only through the spirit of methodical research and progress. However this view of truth as certainty, Gadamer contends, denies the possibility of truth-claims, for instance, in art or literature, where knowledge is not based on fixed empirical data that can be studied, verified and reproduced through method, but is conditioned by uncontrollable and inexhaustible variables, such as the imagination, intuition and artistic sensibility of the artist or writer. Although the study of *Geisteswissenschaften*<sup>1</sup> neither demands or proffers proof nor begins with a clear, general rule, Gadamer maintains that it nevertheless possesses indispensable truth-claims that must be sought after and understood. But how can we realise those experiences of truth that lie outside the dominion of the modern 'natural sciences'? Do we require and rely on the ideal of verification by method? The answer, for Gadamer, is a clear and definitive no! The human sciences, he declares:

... are joined with modes of experience which lie outside science: with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself. These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science (*Truth and Method* xii / *Wahrheit und Methode* xiii-xiv)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The term *Geisteswissenschaften* translates into English as the 'human sciences'. From hereafter, both terms will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sheed and Ward, 1979); *Wahrheit und Methode*. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960). All citations for *Truth and Method* will be cited hereafter as TM. The original German edition *Wahrheit und Methode* will also be cited along side the English translation as WM. Unfortunately, due to limited resources, I have been forced to compromise myself to use the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *Wahrheit und Methode* instead of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. However, it should be noted that there is, according to Gadamer, essentially very little change between the first and the other two editions. The minor alteration to the second edition

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In contrast to his predecessors, such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Johann Droysen and Wilhelm Dilthey whose hermeneutical preoccupation was with developing a strict methodological system, comparable to that of the modern natural sciences, to legitimise the scientificity of the human sciences epistemologically, Gadamer rejects entirely the premise that method is the sole provider of truth and guarantor of validity of all sciences, and posits instead that the revelation of truth-claims in the human sciences occurs within the phenomenon of understanding (*Verständigung*) that comes from dialectic and dialogue. In providing a critical analysis of modern hermeneutics, Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, reveals how all attempts in the last hundred and fifty years to justify the *Geisteswissenschaften* as sciences did not succeed, on the account that every undertaking persisted in defending the human sciences by following Kant – modelling the idea of science and knowledge on the natural sciences and seeking the distinctive features of human sciences in the artistic element (artistic feeling, artistic induction). His explication shows most clearly how Schleiermacher, Droysen and Dilthey all failed to escape from the negative notion of ‘inaccurate sciences’ – with which human sciences are still identified – due to their insistence on viewing the human sciences through the eyes of a modern natural scientist. Their conception of themselves as scientists, in other words, was based on the standard of the natural sciences. What is more, Gadamer’s critique and criticism against the method-guided consciousness of the modern hermeneutic theorists likewise pertain to the positivists of the mid-twentieth century, whose aim was to equate the *Geisteswissenschaften* on the same plane as the natural sciences. However the positivists, Gadamer explains, did not acknowledge the fundamental differences that Dilthey had made between the natural sciences and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, but they rather assumed that the methodology supplied by the natural sciences could in fact provide the human sciences with an accurate, objective method of inquiry, unaffected by changes in historical and scientific norms and premises. Put simply, they claimed that establishing a strict scientific method for the *Geisteswissenschaften* could abolish all subjective intrusions. From Gadamer’s point of view, however, such a methodological approach to the human sciences is inapplicable since it dismisses all cognitive value for disciplines which are influenced by the imagination and talent.

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can be found in the new Foreword. It should also be noted that the English translation used here is based on the second edition of *Wahrheit und Methode* rather than the first. In fact, there are no English translations of the first edition.

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According to Gadamer, the *Geisteswissenschaften* as science 'cannot be fitted into the modern concept of science' (TM 9 / WM 5). Consequently, he argues that the search for a methodological approach to discover and justify truth-claims in human sciences is inappropriate, for it presupposes that the essence of truth discovered in the humanities is analogous to that found in the natural sciences. Indeed, to articulate about knowledge or truth-claims in the human sciences, is not the same as speaking about the certainty of algorithmic theorems. Whereas in the 'objective sciences' the ideal of truth is equated with self-certainty, i.e. with indubitable principles which can serve as starting points for discovering new general principles, obviously in the *Geisteswissenschaften* there are no irreformable, clear and distinct, absolutely certain principles, no indisputable general law or first rule that can lead to new maxims. The human sciences' claims to truth, in comparison to the natural sciences, are of a different kind and order. They do not concern themselves with entities that exist 'out there' in the world or how those entities came into existence; they are rather in the business of exploring the phenomenon of 'Being' of human beings. Their truth-claims are rather discovered and defined in respect to the human condition, to the historicity of mankind; consequently, their clarity and certainty are only acquired within the continuum of *Being*. 'The historical sense, which the human sciences cultivate in themselves', Gadamer explains, 'brings with it a habituation to changing standards that lead to an uncertainty about the use of our own standards'.<sup>3</sup> What is more, the language of the human sciences is very different from the language of the natural sciences. The use of dissimilar languages indicates most clearly in advance that the human sciences' claim to truth is not identical to that of the natural sciences. Modern sciences speak in terms of monological 'sign' language. Words are principally used as an instrument for exact designation. They function as signs or designators which point to things. The symbolic language of mathematics, for instance, is static, self-contained and limited in its scope. Although new concepts may be added to mathematical language, existing concepts seldom evolve or expand their meaningfulness. Concepts, for the most part, are mainly univocal, fixed and precise in their indication. For example, if we take the simple formula for speed:  $v = d/t$  (velocity = distance/time) or the chemical equation for water:  $H_2O = 2H + O$  ( $H_2O$  or water = 2 hydrogen + 1 oxygen), what is understood here is a specific and precise

<sup>3</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer. 'Truth in the Human Sciences' in *Hermeneutics and Truth*. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 27.

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designation of concepts. There is no ambiguity regarding the meaning of the equation or formula since there is one and only one understanding for each concept. This inert character of scientific 'sign' language is what enables that which is designated to be tested, confirmed and reproduced through method. Scientific terms, in other words, do not speak but indicate: 'It can be stated as a fundamental principle that wherever words assume a mere sign function, the original connection between speaking and thinking, with which we are concerned, is changed into an instrumental relationship' (TM 392 / WM 410). In complete contrast, the language of the human sciences is 'natural' and 'living'. It is dynamic, ever growing and changing. The terms we use in the human sciences possess a horizon of meaningfulness, and consequently (metaphorical) ambiguity is inescapable. But precisely because words often possess multiple meanings, this character of plurality also supplies the concepts with a saying-power. Gadamer affirms:

Slowly I became aware that the language customarily used in German philosophy was not just full of preconceptions and prejudices, but also full of depth and significance. Gradually I came to heed the speaking power of words, a power which still goes on speaking in every linguistic usage and in its antecedents. In sum, the language of philosophy itself began to speak again.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the concepts of the *Geisteswissenschaften* do not indicate and explain; they disclose and 'express'! Their significance lies not in exactitude but in expression. Words articulate and disclose themselves in such a way that we learn them. We acquire an understanding of a word, i.e. its meaningfulness, over time, as the word discloses itself to us as it is in its *selfsameness*. If one makes the assertion that 'Juliet is beautiful', for instance, this assertion does not so much indicate precisely what Juliet 'is', instead it expresses a multifarious and inexhaustible range of qualities that 'could' characterise Juliet. The word beautiful is not a closed concept, and thus it cannot be determined 'absolutely'. Within this one concept, there are many other concepts, which are full of their own meaningfulness, that have become embedded over its living history. Consequently, this makes the assertion, 'Juliet is beautiful', equivocal; but at the same time, the term beautiful speaks of Juliet in certain a light so that we can learn something of her from the inherent richness of the concept, and in turn Juliet also discloses a particular character of the word 'beautiful'. Obviously, there is

<sup>4</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer: 'Reflections on My Philosophical Journey', op. cit., 21.

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no precision or pinpoint accuracy in such an assertion. But does this mean that such assertions, which do not use an univocal system of signs, are false or less true than mathematical propositions? Certainly, this is not the case, in that we are not comparing two identical twins but two very individual and dissimilar sciences, each with their own particular set of vocabulary and 'method' of disclosure. Since the language of the human sciences is not an instrument of designation, their truth-claims cannot be discovered through scientific method. Method, in order to be effective, requires a 'sign' language.

An other objection, which Gadamer holds against the search for method validation for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, is in the fact that such a quest indicates a misconception of what the human sciences really are. To demand method, according to Gadamer, is to presuppose that there is a fixed subject-object dichotomy inherent in the *Geisteswissenschaften* – meaning, for instance, that the truth of a work of art is 'out there', disconnected and independent of the perceiver, to be rationally analysed.<sup>5</sup> Certainly when knowledge is acquired through method, there is an independent object of investigation and an impartial observer who examines that particular object from a neutral position by means of logical induction to universal laws; however, in regards to the human sciences such a subject-object schema cannot be established since the subject perusing, i.e. the interpreter, is also the very object of investigation, i.e. the *interpretandum*. This means that the object of the human sciences, i.e. the content of literary and historical studies, is the moral and historical existence of mankind, and insofar as the study of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is concerned, the investigative cogniser (man) is always a part of the object of inquiry. Consequently, he cannot stand over against his subject of perusal as a contemplative subject against an independent object. In historical studies, for instance, the historian can never adopt an attitude of detached contemplation, in that he can neither deny nor stand disconnected, extricated from his own historicity when examining or interpreting historical events. Of course, there is the 'temporal distance' between a given event and the historian, and one could indeed argue for a 'distanced objectivity'; but nevertheless, this does not overcome the fact that the investigator is always fixed within the continuum of (historical) effects, which arise from all given events.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, insofar as his historical perception is

<sup>5</sup> In § 4. 1 it will be shown further, through Gadamer's notion of 'play', that in art and the human sciences in general a subject-object schema is absent.

<sup>6</sup> In § 2. 4 which focuses on the Heideggerian notion of facticity, I will make clear this point concerning the inescapable and ineluctable 'situatedness' of man in his history.



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concerned, he does not view history as a *tabula rasa* or an empty consciousness but always seeks to understand it from his historically tainted position, i.e. a 'prejudiced' perception, for he himself, as an historical being, is immersed and surrounded by history. Consequently he possesses, what Gadamer calls, an 'effective historical consciousness' (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). It seems, according to Gadamer, every event or 'manifestness' of history touches our lives, directly or indirectly, actively or passively. As a matter of fact, we cannot begin to construe properly any 'happening' of history without first taking into account our own set of inherited prejudgements, which in effect derives from every historical event. 'True historical thinking', Gadamer tells us, 'must take account of its own historicity' (TM 267 / WM 283). To be sure, a subject-object dichotomy cannot exist in historical studies since there is an indivisible unity between historian and history, an indispensable fusion, in a manner of speaking, out of which truth and understanding are uncovered. 'The true historical object', Gadamer writes, 'is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding' (ibid.).

It should be noted from the outset that Gadamer does not suggest that we ought to dispense with method. What he does instead is to call into question the status of method by asking if method is the only path to truth. There is no question that we owe much to scientific method, for it has rendered and verified knowledge-claims that have changed substantially the way we think about and perceive our world. Through methodical research and progress, we have disabused many illusions and liberated ourselves from much of our ignorance in regards to our knowledge of the physical world and of our being. In some sense, we could say, that we owe our cultural being to science and its method of verification. When we consider our every day lives, almost nothing goes untouched by science. 'Science is – even as one reproaches it – the alpha and omega of our civilization.'<sup>7</sup> But does this mean that we have complete access to all truths through method? Certainly there are areas of human existence in which scientific methodology cannot pervade nor prevail. In fact, the use of method is always limited in scope, in that it is always confined to a particular language, i.e. scientific language, and to a specific set of facts, which it tries to prove in abstraction from other facts that may be related with them. The human scientific

<sup>7</sup> 'Truth in the Human Sciences', op. cit., 38.

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research does not so much focus univocally on the achievement of comprehensible and useful results, but rather concentrates on questioning. Method represents at best a good way to find answers but one cannot expect to discover new questions through method.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, method only renders a partial view of 'Being'. Hence, rather than constituting an unrealisable methodical program of practical guidelines for discovering and justifying truth-claims in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, directly and indirectly raises two fundamental questions: 1). What is truth? and 2). What are the necessary conditions for the possibility of cognising truth? In his view, understanding the 'whatness' of truth does not begin with inductive logic, but rather with the 'hermeneutic of facticity', the interpretation of *Dasein* (Being-there), which Heidegger brought to light in his well-known achievement *Being and Time*. Heidegger, we can say, fundamentally breaks from the method-minded position of the nineteenth-century hermeneuticists by abandoning the traditional perception of truth as agreement and by rejecting the idea of the search for a 'methodological' hermeneutics to concentrate on explicating the 'givenness' of human existence. In explicating the meaning of 'Being' and 'Being-there (*Dasein*) in-the-world', Heidegger explains in *Being and Time* that truth is neither absolute correspondence or coherence of something to something, but rather the 'sudden moment' when a phenomenological uncovering or unfolding of the being of Being-there as it is in its *selfsameness* occurs. In simpler terms, truth, as he puts it, is *alētheia*, unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) or disclosure (*Erschlossenheit*).<sup>9</sup> This formulation of truth in essences separates the notion of truth from the notion of certainty and appropriates it to the finitude of *Dasein*. But given that truth is *alētheia*, how shall we disclose and grasp unconcealment (truth) itself. In Heidegger's view the possibility for grasping truth lies in the phenomenon of understanding. The structure of understanding, he contends, is what allows truth to be 'authenticated'. Understanding in this sense is itself a mode of disclosure and as such, it is itself truth.

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer fundamentally rejects the notion: *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* and instead takes over Heidegger's 'phenomenal' rediscovery

<sup>8</sup> See Jean Grondin. *Hermeneutische Wahrheit?* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1994), p. 106.

<sup>9</sup> Truth in Greek translates as *alētheia*, which is made up of the prefix *ἀ-* ('not') and the verbal stem *-λαθ-* ('to escape notice', 'to be concealed'). Truth thus may be understood as 'not covered' or 'un-concealed'.

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of *Wahrheit als Unverborgenheit* (truth as unconcealment).<sup>10</sup> By accepting the notion of unconcealment and the primordial relationship between truth and understanding, Gadamer, as it were, discovers a direct access through the impasse of modern hermeneutics, which is oriented to method and methodology for legitimising and justifying the so-called 'truth experience' in the *Geisteswissenschaften*. In fact his treatise radically moves away from the 'methodical rationality' that characterised much of traditional hermeneutics to offer a different kind of hermeneutical theory, one which considers the phenomenon of understanding and the ontology of language as the opening gates to truth. Gadamer calls his theory '*Philosophische Hermeneutik*' (philosophical hermeneutics). Philosophical hermeneutics, he contends, is not concerned with formulating general principles for interpretation or with discovering unassailable certainties of agreement or correspondence, rather it seeks to grasp how understanding is possible and through understanding, how truth, i.e. unconcealment, is cognisable in the human sciences. In Gadamer's view, these questions are fundamental in challenging the unquestioned domination of Kantian thought, which placed and delimited all concepts of knowledge and truth exclusively under the umbrella of theoretical and practical employment of reason.

### **Philosophical Hermeneutics vis à vis Kantian Aesthetics**

Central to Gadamer's endeavour in *Truth and Method* is the overcoming of Kant's radical subjectivisation of aesthetics. In his *Critique of Judgment* Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), one of the most highly influential Western philosophers of modern time, provides, with his transcendental foundation of aesthetic judgment, a new basis for aesthetics. Kant, in general, subjectivises and aestheticises the judgment of taste. That is to say, he abandons the moral and social implications of taste and limits its significance exclusively to the aesthetic realm. By virtually categorising and labelling 'subjective' and 'aesthetic' to whatever does not measure up to the standards of the objective and methodical natural sciences, Kant restricts and confines the notion of truth to the realm of pure natural scientific cognition, departing from the 'humanist tradition' in which judgments of taste still

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<sup>10</sup> In all, Gadamer concurs with the essence of Heidegger's ontological account of truth (and understanding), but this does not mean that he simply takes Heidegger word for word. Gadamer's treatment of truth, or rather his understanding of how truth is experienced, i.e. the understanding of the conditions necessary to cognise truth, in some sense diverges significantly from Heidegger's notion of truth experience. For Gadamer the unconcealment is ultimately tied to dialogue and dialectics, as we shall come to discover.

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possessed a cognitive value. Strictly speaking, his subjectivisation of taste discredited all conceptual knowledge except that of the natural sciences. But moreover, it compelled the 'human-sciences-to-be' to be subjugated to a methodology of the natural sciences in self-analysis in order to justify their own truth-claim and avoid relativism – in simpler terms, to adapt the practices and standards of the natural sciences in order to legitimise themselves as 'sciences'. Following Kant, the humanistic tradition – which prior to Kant was the governing norm of human sciences – was thus displaced by the increasingly dominant method of the natural sciences. As such, the human sciences' claim to truth came to be measured by a standard alien to them. The study of the *Geisteswissenschaften*-to-be arrived at a critical turning point. The consequence of Kant's *Third Critique* in short meant that there was now the need to justify the autonomy of the *Geisteswissenschaften* independently from the natural sciences. In the nineteenth century, hermeneutic theorists, such as Schleiermacher, Droysen and Dilthey pursued this aim extensively. However, as we have indicated earlier, their attempts to legitimise the autonomy of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and its epistemological independence ultimately failed due to their inability to escape their methodological consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

In his attempt to counteract the consequences of Kant's radical subjectivisation of aesthetic reflective judgement and the methodical mode of knowledge represented by the natural sciences, Gadamer uses Heidegger's interpretation of *Dasein* and his formulation of truth as 'unconcealment' to legitimise knowledge and truth-claims in the human sciences. However, this is not to say that Gadamer wishes to refute or circumvent Kant, for he neither abandons nor rejects Kant's insights concerning reflective judgement. On the one hand, Gadamer certainly concurs with and advocates Kant's establishment of aesthetic autonomy – that is to say, he agrees with Kant that aesthetic judgement is independent from conceptual knowledge. However, on the other hand, he disagrees with Kant's assertion that the concept of truth is to be understood wholly in relation to conceptual knowledge. Thus what Gadamer attempts is to reassert the ontological foundations of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, which Kant dismissed when he established the autonomy of aesthetics, through the 'practical discipline' of philosophical hermeneutics.

<sup>11</sup> In the first chapter, I will offer a brief overview of the work of Schleiermacher, Droysen and Dilthey.

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To rediscover the ontological foundations of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the first major segment of *Truth and Method* concerns 'The Freeing Up [or Uncovering] of the Truth Question in the Experience of Art' ('Freilegung der Wahrheitsfrage an der Erfahrung der Kunst'). Here, it pays to give some special attention to the German word *Freilegung* (freeing or uncovering), for we can already see that Gadamer implies that the question of truth in art is somehow 'eclipsed' and obscured – thus in need of unconcealment – insofar as it has become lost and therefore in need of recovery. In his view the truth question regarding art has become clouded and confined not as one might assume by the natural sciences but by the aesthetic theory – namely that of Kant's *Third Critique* – 'that lets itself be restricted to a scientific concept of truth' (TM xiii / WM xv). Accordingly, part one of his investigation includes a critique of 'aesthetic consciousness' inherited from Kant and his successors. But before turning to his exposition concerning the question of truth in relation to aesthetic experience, Gadamer first explores 'The Significance of the Humanist Tradition for the Human Sciences', examining four guiding humanistic concepts (*Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, Judgement and Taste) which exemplify 'amethodical' means of acquiring knowledge and truth. Here, Gadamer reveals forms of moral and social knowledge, which do not derive from reasoned proof, a universal rule but from humanistic concepts, which constitute a mode of knowing and of being. Although Gadamer is hardly explicit in revealing the structures of understanding in the first segment of *Truth and Method*, it seems clear that he does illuminate some of the basic ideas that constitute understanding by way of the humanistic concepts. These, we shall learn, are ideas such as 'tradition' and 'openness'.

In section 2 of Part I, Gadamer elucidates the ontological significance of the work of art. This segment includes the notion of 'play' (*Spiel*) which demonstrates the phenomenological process of truth/disclosure in the work of art and how that unfolding is to be understood. The experience of truth in works of art serves as important paradigm to extend the concept of knowledge and truth to historical understanding and the *Geisteswissenschaften* in general. For Gadamer historical understanding, similar to the 'beautiful' in works of art, is not to be defined according to pre-existing rules. That is to say, understanding of a particular historical event cannot be grasped by subsuming it under general rules since it is always occupied with the particular historical event. Every historical event, in other words, must be scrutinised individually. In *Truth and Method* Gadamer constitutes a new conception of historical understanding. What his insights aim to offer is a

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philosophical statement that emphasises the 'hermeneutical' task, which suggests a need to overcome the primacy of self-consciousness, i.e. the necessity to transcend the self-alienation, or rather the critical-distancing of the 'self' in the experience of art and history. Generally speaking, Gadamer stresses our need to become aware of how much of ourselves is involved in the experience of art and history, while at the same time opposing the notion of disinterested, spectatorial stand – adopting an impartial attitude – as represented in 'aesthetic' or 'historical' consciousness when encountering works of art or studies in history. This point of view is further emphasised by Gadamer through the analogy of the 'play' or 'game' (*Spiel*). Since the inherited forms of consciousness, i.e. the 'aesthetic consciousness' and 'historical consciousness' handed down from German Idealism, 'represent only alienated forms of our true history',<sup>12</sup> Gadamer's primary interest is to bring to light the recognition of an 'effective historical consciousness' (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). Briefly, Gadamer discounts the myth of 'aesthetic consciousness' and 'historical consciousness' which promote the idea that we can possess an unbiased and *prejudiceless* or *presuppositionless* position for judgements concerning art and history, and for that matter our understanding in general. His position claims that since we exist within the continuum of history, we cannot therefore be unaffected by our history. As such, our consciousness is an effect or the result of history, i.e., it is one which is 'effected by and effecting history'.<sup>13</sup>

The significance which Gadamer places on his notion of 'effective historical consciousness' cannot be overestimated. By bringing to recognition an 'effective historical consciousness' in the experience of art, of history and philosophy, Gadamer expands Heidegger's ontological account of understanding and offers groundbreaking insights into the phenomenon of understanding, adding a critical dimension to hermeneutics. What he proposes with the notion of 'effective historical consciousness' is that understanding is conditioned by history and tradition, arguing in effect that we exist within an inescapable historical continuum, that is, we are standing immersed within an event of inheritance (*Überlieferungsgeschehen*), which itself preserves prejudices (*Vorurteile*), that determine

<sup>12</sup> 'Reflections on My Philosophical Journey', op. cit., 27.

<sup>13</sup> See Lawrence Kennedy Schmidt, *The Epistemology of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. (2<sup>nd</sup> unchanged ed. Frankfurt/ Main: Peter Lang, 1987), p. 114.

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and condition our understanding.<sup>14</sup> However, this does not imply that we are always fully aware of the total influence that history and tradition, i.e. the inherited prejudices, have on our understanding. Of course there are presuppositions which forever remain hidden throughout our lives. Our quest is simply to discover and recognise as many as possible those prejudices which influence our understanding.

With the notion of 'effective historical consciousness', Gadamer not only reconceptualises the notion of understanding in the human sciences but he also stretches and expands what he calls 'the hermeneutical problem' to the natural sciences. According to Gadamer, the natural sciences are not immune to the hermeneutical problem, and he explains that modern sciences ignore the fact that they too are effected by their historicity. The claim for scientific objectiveness by natural sciences, Gadamer argues, is false, maintaining that the methodology observed by the natural sciences distracts from the fact that the natural sciences too participate within the historical continuum and are thus conditioned by presuppositions, presumptions and prejudices.

### The Objectives of the Present Thesis

The central concern of the present thesis focuses on the task of exploring and illuminating Gadamer's attempt to re-establish the ontological foundations of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and therein legitimise the human sciences' claim to truth. However, in order to keep the present work within a controllable scope, I shall limit myself primarily to the study of Gadamer's treatment of the humanistic concepts: *Bildung* (culture), *Sensus communis* (common sense), *Urteil* (judgement) and *Geschmack* (taste), and his understanding of the ontological nature of art. Within this frame, my study will trace the unfolding of Gadamer's conception of knowledge and understanding, examining in the process specific concepts, such as 'tradition' and 'authority' which affect one's way of understanding, not only of human sciences but of every human experience. What is more, the current study also seeks to comprehend the significance of 'play' and dialogue, which Gadamer exemplifies explicitly in the experience of art, in respect to illuminating how understanding and the experience of truth take place altogether.

<sup>14</sup> The understanding of *Vorurteile* (prejudice) is a theory which Gadamer discovered through Heidegger, and as we mentioned above, Heidegger play a significant role in helping Gadamer to develop his own thesis concerning understanding and 'effective historical consciousness'.

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But first, to comprehend the full problematic scope of modern hermeneutics, I initially turn to Kant's *Third Critique* in an effort to distill some of the far-reaching consequences of Kant's subjectivisation of aesthetic judgment. In my view, the complex nature of the *Third Critique* and its dramatic affects on modern hermeneutics seems to demand and warrant a comprehensive examination, one which I aim to offer presently. Hence, in the first chapter the focus will be to show precisely how Kant constitutes the autonomy of aesthetics and in doing so, how he deprives aesthetic judgment of its cognitive import, which it still possessed in the humanistic tradition. As we shall discover, by reducing aesthetics to the realm of subjective universal and therefore denying it of any cognitive significance, Kant essentially marks the end of the humanistic tradition – to which Gadamer returns – in which aesthetics still possessed an epistemological value. The consequential effects of Kant's aesthetics proper on modern hermeneutics cannot be overestimated, for in the nineteenth century hermeneutic theorists from Schleiermacher to Dilthey found themselves desperately searching for an epistemological foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften* by adopting the apt model of methodical procedure of the natural sciences. Chapter one, thus, also includes a brief overview of modern hermeneutics and looks at the development of traditional hermeneutics, and hermeneutics of facticity belong to Martin Heidegger, and how these traditions came down to Gadamer.

In chapter two the focus of my examination will be on the guiding humanistic concepts. Although Gadamer's elucidation of these concepts seems relatively modest compared to some of the other major sections of his work, the importance of these concepts, however, seems no less great, for they are imperative to understanding the essential task of Gadamer's philosophical project. As we shall learn, it was through the guiding humanistic concepts that the 'human-sciences-to-be', prior to Kant, found its justification and legitimacy. Prior to any application of method for attaining knowledge, the humanistic concepts, Gadamer shows, represent not only a *way of knowing* but also a *way of being* through which man discovers knowledge and understanding. And therefore, he finds in these concepts the key starting point for exploring the *ontological condition* which makes understanding and the acquisition of knowledge possible.

Finally, the third chapter is devoted to the question of truth in the work of art. For Gadamer the experience of art is the all important, exemplary paradigm which demonstrates the legitimacy of the human sciences' claim to truth. Hence, the purpose of the concluding



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chapter will be to investigate how Gadamer formulates the ontological significance of art, examining in the process the notion of 'play' and 'mimesis'. Understanding play, in my view, is fundamental to understanding the core of 'philosophical hermeneutics', in that through the notion of play, Gadamer reveals the phenomenological and dialogical structure of understanding. Play exemplifies in a unique way how understanding and truth-experiences of the human sciences occur and how they are to be understood.

With respect to the concept of mimesis, Gadamer does not simply employ the literal meaning of 'imitation'. For him, the mimetic represents a primordial phenomenon which expresses not so much an event of imitation as transformation.<sup>15</sup> Gadamer explains that the mimetic experience conveys the identification of something in its *selfsameness* and not a reference to an original. According to him, it was the classicist aesthetic of imitation that confined the original understanding of mimesis as the imitation of the original. And so, to uncover the hidden implication of the term, he follows the phenomenological approach of 'letting things appear in themselves' and in effect deconstructs 'the static conceptualities, the scholasticism and scientific objectifying, in our present way of thinking and to go behind the received interpretations of Plato and Aristotle'.<sup>16</sup>

In conjunction with 'play' and 'mimesis' the final chapter will also examine the problems concerning the notion of 'aesthetic consciousness' and 'aesthetic differentiation'. According to Gadamer, both of these concepts serve to divorce art from the sphere of reality. Aesthetic consciousness, he contends, demands the abstraction of art from its true existence. It places art in its own autonomous world to be looked at as an object that can be analysed, but examined only insofar as we look at the form of the art and never its content – for there is no content after the separation from reality, Gadamer conjectures. This abstraction of art from the lifeworld, which aesthetic consciousness requires, Gadamer terms as 'aesthetic differentiation'. Aesthetic differentiation allows art to be viewed solely as 'pure work of art' but at the same time ignores the purpose, function and the meaning a work of art holds. But if we look at art and enjoy it merely for its forms, can we claim that there is knowledge in the artwork? Apparently the disconnection of art from the lifeworld erases all significance that the work of art possesses. Thus one of the primary objects of

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer. 'Poetry and Mimesis' in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. (Trans. Nicholas Wulker Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Palmer. 'Ritual, Rightness, and Truth' in *Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. op. cit., 530.

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*Truth and Method* is the overcoming of the myth of aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation.

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### § 1. Kant's Formulation of Aesthetic Judgment

The present chapter examines Kant's *Third Critique*, the *Critique of Judgment*, which is essentially divided into two major parts: a.) 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' and b.) 'Critique of Teleological Judgment'. Here, Kant is primarily concerned with the transcendental possibility of judgments; that is, he attempts to establish an a priori principle for judgments. Moreover, he questions the essential quality and structure of aesthetic judgments, the mental actions that constitute them, their distinctness from moral or cognitive claims, and the conditions which must be complied with a defence of particular aesthetic claims to be legitimate. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant defined judgment as essentially 'determinative', that is, the capacity to subordinate empirically given particulars under a universal law or concept provided by the faculty of understanding. To this extent, Kant's definition of judgments of beauty excluded the possibility to ascribe to judgments of beauty any a priori principle of their own.

However after his *Second Critique*, Kant realised that there was a need to formulate a philosophical system to bridge the division between the faculty of pure cognition, understanding – the phenomenal world of cause and effect (*Critique of Pure Reason*) – and the faculty of desire, reason – the noumenal world of freedom (*Critique of Practical Reason*). The mediating link between understanding and reason, Kant called judgment (*Urteilkraft*) 'of which we may reasonably presume by analogy that it may likewise contain, if not a special authority to prescribe laws, still a principle peculiar to itself upon which laws are sought, although one merely subjective a priori'.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with his predecessors, such as G. Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754) who divided cognitive knowledge into a 'superior upper part', i.e. perfect knowledge founded in the realm of intellect that deals with clear and distinct ideas, and an 'inferior lower part', i.e. imperfect knowledge deriving from imagination and sense that yields arbitrary and confused ideas, Kant assumed in his *First Critique* that judgment was simply

<sup>1</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Introduction III. 15. Hereafter cited as CJ. In a letter to K. L. Reinhold (December 31, 1787) Kant states: 'I am now at work on the critique of taste, and I have discovered a kind of a priori principle different from those heretofore observed. For there are three faculties of the mind: the faculty of desire. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (theoretical) Reason, I have found a priori principles for the first of these, and in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, a priori principles for the third. I tried to find them for the second as well, and though I thought it impossible to find such principles, the systematic nature of the analysis of the previously mentioned faculties of the human mind allowed me to discover them, giving me ample material for the rest of my life, material at which to marvel and possibly explore. So now I recognise three parts of philosophy, each of which has its a priori principles, which can be enumerated and for which one can delimit precisely the knowledge that may be based on them: theoretical philosophy, teleology, and practical philosophy, of which the second is, to be sure, the least rich in a priori grounds of determination. I hope to have a manuscript completed though not in print by Easter; it will be entitled "Critique of Taste". *Philosophical Correspondence* 1759-99, (ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig. Chicago: University Press, 1967), pp. 127-8.

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a lower cognitive faculty, for he thought it possessed no general principles under which a particular can be subsumed. Judgment was considered common in the sense that everyone possesses the capacity to judge.

However, in the *Third Critique* Kant claims a distinct function for judgment, namely 'reflection'. He postulates that the reflective capacity of judgment, in effect, suggests that there must be an independent a priori principle for judgment: specifically, the 'purposiveness' (finality) of nature. This *principle of finality* proposes that nature is organised in such a way that it is made intelligible through our cognitive faculties, and therefore provides the possibility to discover concepts and laws in terms of which nature can be cognised. Thus, Kant states:

Now this transcendental concept of a finality of nature is neither a concept of nature nor of freedom, since it attributes nothing at all to the Object, i.e. to nature, but only represents the unique mode in which we must proceed in our reflection upon the objects of nature with a view to getting a thoroughly interconnected whole of experience, and so is a subjective principle, i.e. maxim, of judgment.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, aesthetic judgment is 'the faculty of estimating formal finality (otherwise called subjective) by the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. . . .'<sup>3</sup> Since we have recapitulated Kant's account of the general idea of finality (purposiveness), let us now turn to my primary interest which lies within Part I of the *Critique*, involving the 'Analytic of the Beautiful', the transcendental exposition of beauty. Here, Kant discusses the judgment of taste and its four necessary conditions: quality, quantity, relation and modality.

### § 1.1 The First Moment

Kant initiates his discussion of the 'First Moment' with the exploration of the specific quality concerning the judgment of taste. He begins, first, by confirming that the judgment of taste 'is not a cognitive judgment, and so not logical, but is aesthetic – which means that it is one whose determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*.'<sup>4</sup> According to Kant, judgment of taste is independent of all interest and is qualitatively founded on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure:

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction V. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction VIII. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, § I. 41-42.

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Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion *apart from any interest*. The object of such a delight is called *beautiful*.<sup>5</sup>

It is Kant's primary enterprise to elucidate the particular character of pleasure since pleasure indeed plays a fundamental role for the judgment of taste. He explains 'All delight (as is said or thought) is itself sensation (of pleasure)'.<sup>6</sup> However, in order to explore and supply a sharper notion of the specific quality of the judgment of taste, Kant explicitly differentiates three different kinds of delight: delight in the beautiful (*das Schöne*), delight in the agreeable (*das Angenehme*) and delight in the good (*das Gute*). In the first instance, Kant speaks of 'the beautiful', or rather the experience of the beautiful (aesthetic experience), in relation to the feeling of pleasure but pleasure in the beautiful potentially is common to everyone, that is, universally communicable, to use his terminology; consequently, in doing so, he rules out the possibility of any individual satisfaction. Kant further maintains:

Now, where the question is whether something is beautiful, we do not want to know, whether we, or any one else, or even could be, concerned in the real existence of the thing, but rather what estimate we form of it on mere contemplation (intuition or reflection). . . . All one wants to know is whether the mere representation of the object is to my liking, no matter how indifferent I may be to the real existence of the object of this representation. It is quite plain that in order to say that the object is beautiful, and to show that I have taste, everything turns on the meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object. Everyone must allow that a judgment on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste.<sup>7</sup>

We may conclude that '[i]t is not the nature of the beautiful object as such which interests him [Kant] in the first place. What he is concerned with is to analyse the judgments in which we call things beautiful', as H. W. Cassirer perceptively notes.<sup>8</sup> Kant's interest does not lie in qualifying or canonising the beautiful by means of an universal formula as his Scottish predecessor, Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), for instance, sought to accomplish

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., § 5. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., § 3. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., § 2. 42, 43

<sup>8</sup> H.W. Cassirer. *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Judgment*. (London: Methuen & Co. LTD, 1938),

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with his definition of the beautiful that beauty is ‘unity amidst variety’<sup>9</sup>; instead, his inquiry focuses on the nature of the pleasurable reaction, which articulates itself in the judgment of taste<sup>10</sup>; moreover, he examines the anthropological conditions of any aesthetical communication. Kant primarily attributes the kind of pleasure determined for aesthetic judgment as ‘disinterested’ and sets it therefore apart from the pleasure we take in the agreeable and in the good. He explains:

One must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the real existence of the thing, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste.<sup>11</sup>

To put it in transparent terms, the beautiful is that which pleases in disinterested contemplation, i.e. intuition or reflection. What Kant claims is that the judgment of taste must be free of all interest, i.e., it must be determined by the feeling of pleasure in the state of ‘disinterestedness’. But what is he precisely implying by the notion of disinterestedness? Before he can give a positive definition of the ‘negative’ (*dis*interestedness) account of this notion, Kant first tries to explain what is meant by ‘interest’, and consequently introduces his notion of the delight in the agreeable and the good. The agreeable is, according to Kant, that which the senses find pleasing in sensation and involves, as does the delight in the good, a reference to the faculty of desire (*‘Begehrungsvermögen’*). Interest (in relation to the agreeable and the good), Kant adds, describes the ‘delight which we connect with the representation of the real existence of an object’.<sup>12</sup> The agreeable coupled with interest pertains specifically to ‘a delight pathologically conditioned (by stimuli) . . .’<sup>13</sup> In other words, Kant, here, determines that the objects which provoke the subjective sensation, i.e. the agreeable feelings are desirable for the simple reason that they please and gratify the senses. As for the good coupled with interest, this delight differs from the agreeable in that it involves a ‘pure practical delight’.<sup>14</sup> As Salim Kemal explains, ‘[f]or Kant, “good” includes moral worth, instrumental worth – as when it satisfies some ideal and so is a “good” object of its kind.’<sup>15</sup>

p. 178.

<sup>9</sup> *Philosophical Writing: Francis Hutcheson*. Treatise I. p. 16. (London: Everyman, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Although here it may sound as if what distinguishes aesthetic pleasure is merely how it feels, but of course it is much more than that, as it will be shown.

<sup>11</sup> *CJ* § 2. 43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, § 2. 42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, § 5. 48.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Kemal, Salim. *Kant's Aesthetic Theory: An Introduction*. (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), p. 35.

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This, in effect, implies that the delight in the good must be founded on a concept, that is, we must have an idea of what the object that pleases is intended to be. A further implication is that there is the relation of reason, to (at least possible) willing, and thus a delight in the existence of an Object or action, . . .<sup>16</sup> since the concept of an end is suggested. Here, let us observe a simple analogy that illustrates Kant's notion of desire for the good which is different from his notion of 'disinterested' pure aesthetic judgment, e.g. if we say that 'good health' is something good, i.e. *good for something* and *good in itself*, for the reasons that good health secures the probability for a longer life and for its intrinsic value – that no one wishes to be ill – then we could say that everything which serves as a means to the end for good health is to be desired and therefore to be called good, e.g. good nutrition, mental activity and physical exercise. This judgment is not related to the judgment of taste, but rather is a judgment based on desire and its usefulness, i.e., it is a delight in the good. Moreover, it involves a concept – a rule.

In retrospect, the delight in the agreeable and in the good in both cases are linked with the notion of interest and therefore involve the faculty of desire. As Kemal confirms, 'in the case of desire, we value the object for the purpose – moral or sensual – it serves, and the fact that it exists is itself an occasion for delight because it can satisfy our purposes.'<sup>17</sup> The judgment of taste, by contrast, is made independent of all interest. If asked whether something is beautiful or not, one could answer independent of the real existence of the object. One does not have to approve or to wish the existence of an object when one calls that object beautiful. Kant explicitly maintains:

Delight in the beautiful must depend upon the reflection on an object precursory to some (not entirely determined) concept. It is thus also differentiated from the agreeable, which rests entirely upon sensation.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, since the delight in the good also infers 'delight in the *existence* of an Object or action', it too is differentiated by Kant from the judgment of taste. In Kant's view, the judgment of taste is a paradigm of reflective judgment since the object is judged without regard to any definite concept, but exclusively with respect to whether the contemplation of its form incites a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Aesthetic responses provide pleasure, i.e., the beautiful simply pleases, without taking interest in the existence of an object. Cassirer similarly notes, '[w]hether we desire the existence of an object or do not

<sup>16</sup> CJ § 4, 46.

<sup>17</sup> Kemal, *op. cit.*, 35.

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desire it, is a question which does not enter into our judgments about its beauty. . . . An aesthetic judgment about beauty is entirely indifferent to the existence or non-existence of its object.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the object – or at least an imagination of it – must exist in order to arouse the particular aesthetic reaction; however, in essence, one is indifferent in one's aesthetic attitude towards the real existence of the object. Kant emphasises that the object is to be judged in its pure contemplation (*Betrachtung – Anschauung oder Reflexion*). 'Beautiful' is not an attribute which belongs to the object, but strictly speaking, it is an expression of pleasure in perceiving or merely imagining the object. The phrase 'x is beautiful' (The flower is beautiful.) suggests that 'beautiful' is a predicate (property) of the object. But this is, according to Kant, a linguistical confusion, based on the old ontological theory of the beautiful. However, it is important to emphasise here that although our judgment of taste may be subjective and the activity of judging may involve grasping order without applying a determinate concept, they are still judgments and will have the same forms. Further, it should be emphasised that judgments of taste do not differ from cognitive claims in that their judging character is diminished. However, a question remains: what happens if the flower does not possess the quality of beauty, and the phrase expresses exclusively a particular subjective reaction, a feeling of pleasure? In such a case, it is much more plausible when Kant claims that the aesthetic attitude is free from any interest in the existence of the flower. In the aesthetic attitude, the emphasis is not on the object but exclusively pertains to the specific quality of the reaction, which is caused or triggered by the object or a representation of it. Here, we must ponder and question whether Kant's formulation of the quality of the aesthetic attitude is entirely (in every respect) satisfying because we need to have an interest in the existence of the phenomena which arouse pleasure, otherwise an aesthetic reaction would not come about at all. But the aesthetic reaction has no longer an interest in the existence of the object, which motivated this reaction. When we say: this flower is beautiful, we do not ascribe any properties to the flower. We merely express that we take pleasure in it. However, when we say: this flower is red, it is obvious that in this kind of judgment, we indeed say something about a property which belongs to the flower, to the object. And this cannot be true unless the object exists. While the judgment in the former case is an aesthetic judgment of taste, the latter indicates a cognitive judgment since one can ascribe the

<sup>18</sup> CJ § 4, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Cassirer, *op. cit.*, 180.



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particular sensation of the red colour here, for example, to an object, namely the flower, that is outside ourselves. Accordingly, the judgment of taste is essentially different from logical/cognitive judgment since this kind of judgment rather expresses something about our feelings and us rather than about the object and its properties. Essentially, Kant makes the notion of 'aesthetic' in this particular context of judgment of taste synonymous with 'subjective' and by doing so, he bases the determination of the judgment of taste not on the object being judged, but instead on the judging subject itself, who is self-conscious of his/her responding feelings against the particular 'aesthetic' object.<sup>20</sup> Clearly in cognitive judgments, *understanding* (*Verstand*) makes the necessary connection between the representation and the object and leads us, therefore, to a certain kind of knowledge, whereas in aesthetic judgment *imagination* (*Einbildungskraft*) plays the decisive role. What is meant by this is that '[h]ere the representation is referred wholly to the subject, . . . and this forms the basis of a quite separate faculty of discriminating and estimating, that *contributes nothing to knowledge*.'<sup>21</sup>

By determining the aesthetic attitude as 'disinterested' Kant discovers a criterion which enables him to discriminate aesthetic judgment from both moral judgment, i.e. the distinction of good and bad, and the judgment of sensation, i.e. the distinction of agreeable and disagreeable or pleasant and unpleasant. While the aesthetic attitude reflects the state of the subject in the face of the phenomenon, which we call beautiful, both moral judgment and sensual judgment are essentially related to the object. This conclusion reveals that Kant is exclusively concerned with the differentiation of judgments. Thus, it is possible – and this enlarges the social leeway of communication a lot – that one can disapprove something morally but appreciate it at the same time aesthetically. In § 48 Kant makes this explicitly clear by stating:

Where fine art evidences its superiority is in the beautiful descriptions it gives of things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing. The Furies, diseases, devastation of war, and the like, can (as evils) be very beautifully described, nay even represented in pictures.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See CJ §1. 41–42. Kant uses the term aesthetic in the sense owed to classical Greek usage that refers to anything that deals with sensibility whether in cognition or in feelings. Compare with Kemat. *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> CJ § 1. 42. I have italicised a portion of the quote here to underline the significance of Kant's proposition. In Chapter II, I will return to this specific point to show the value and relevance of Gadamer's critical reading of Kant, for this is one of the central issues concerning Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. See also CJ § 15. 71.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

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Everything depends on the perspective, i.e. whether one approaches the object from an aesthetic or ethic-moral point of view. In the aesthetic attitude, one is completely disinterested in the possible moral dimension of a thing and vice versa, meaning that the moral attitude should, likewise, respect the 'autonomy' of the aesthetic judgment. These ideas were revolutionary in the eighteenth century since they liberated the communication of art from all moral and religious standardisation and provided the possibility to make even evil and moral reprehensibility to a fascinating *sujet* of the aesthetic communication.

To summarise the 'First Moment' or declaration of the judgment of taste, Kant postulates that in order to comprehend the beautiful, we must view it in light of the subject and its disinterested feeling of pleasure. In order to define and emphasise this specific quality of pleasure, Kant differentiates it from the agreeable and the good, which also involve pleasure, but – in contrast to the beautiful – with reference to the faculty of desire. Kant stresses that the judgment of taste must be divorced from all interest; otherwise it is partisan, and therefore not a pure judgment of taste. The experience of the beautiful, simply stated, warrants satisfaction without reference to the faculty of desire; i.e. our natural side, nor by rules, i.e. our cognitive capacity. Hence, it is *free* delight, meaning that it 'is disinterestedly based on the formal subjective purposiveness in the object. (In Kantian terminology, this becomes: the formal subjective purposiveness in the representation through which an object is given and in the contemplation of which our cognitive powers, the imagination and the understanding, are in harmony and free play.)'<sup>23</sup> Yet nevertheless the beautiful is characterised as a feeling of pleasure similar to the delight in the agreeable and the good. In contrast to the aesthetic response, the delight in the agreeable and the good are both coupled with interest. They are not indifferent to the existence of an object but rather are dependent on its existence. Whereas the agreeable 'gratifies man', the good possesses an 'objective worth'. We can see, therefore, that Kant is well aware that pleasure occurs not only in the aesthetic moment but also in other occasions. His analysis points to the various ways we regard pleasure in these occasions, in view of our behaviour – the rules we observe – rather than with respect to merely introspective intuition. Melvin Rader writes:

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<sup>23</sup> Crawford, Donald. *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 38-39.

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No one before or since Kant has more clearly distinguished [a]esthetic contemplation from practical, moral, cognitive, and appetitive interest. All of these interest, in one way or another, are concerned for the real existence of their objects. Kant defined 'disinterestedness' as fascinated attention in the absence of such concern. The [a]esthetic object may be imaginary or real, but what is [a]esthetically relevant is its manifest forms and qualities as disinterestedly felt and envisaged.<sup>24</sup>

### § 1.2 The Second Moment

In the 'Second Moment' of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful', Kant investigates the quantity of judgment of taste. Here, he is concerned with the judgment of taste and its claim for universal validity. In other words, to what extent is our judgment of taste universally valid? Hitherto, we have emphasised Kant's approach to the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' in reference to the subject. But now, we are confronted with a challenging problem: the conflict between subjectivity on one side and a judgment claiming universality on the other. The classical thinkers prior to Kant were not aware of this conflict. Their approach to examining aesthetic judgment was rather characterised by 'passive mirroring', the creation of word units which represent objects (or aspect of things) in the world on the foundation of primary visual encounter. Even Kant's earlier writings show an influence of the empirical method of proving universal validity. For example, in his lecture concerning logic (Philippi notes) Kant explains: 'Die Urteile des Schönen gehen aufs Objekt, daher haben sie eine Allgemeingültigkeit.'<sup>25</sup> or: 'Ein Gegenstand an dem dieses alles in einem fasslichen Verhältniss angebracht ist, ist wesentlich schön und gefällt allgemein.'<sup>26</sup> But despite his obvious empirical approach to the object, we can already see a differentiation compared to the rationalistic aestheticians. Kant asserted: 'Was allgemein gefällt, gefällt auf zwiefache Art: 1.) nach Gesetzen der Sinnlichkeit; das ist schön und gefällt in der Erscheinung. 2.) nach Gesetzen des Verstandes; das ist gut und gefällt in

<sup>24</sup> Rader, Melvin. 'The Experiences of the Beholder'. in *A Modern Book of Esthetics: An Anthology*. (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), p. 332.

<sup>25</sup> Jens Kulenkampff. *Materialien zu Kants 'Kritik der Urteilskraft'*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), p. 104. All translations from the Philippi notes are my own.: 'The judgments of the beautiful refer to the object and therefore they have an universal validity.'

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107. Trans. 'An object in which all this is represented in a comprehensible relation is essentially beautiful and pleases universally.'

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Begriffen.<sup>27</sup> This re-evaluation of representation and the search for the underlying organic function is clearly demonstrated in Kant's critical philosophy. The acquisition of knowledge, Kant was convinced, must involve more than simply re-presenting and classifying the orders of things. He sets out, consequently, to uncover the subjective (and universally valid) conditions for the possibility of representation. Kant's justification of aesthetic judgment, constituted on a transcendental philosophical perspective, is, however, in conflict between setting the determining ground of the aesthetic judgment in the subject and its claim for universal validity.

Here, we see a differentiation between the cognitive capacity of sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstand*) which prepares the framework for the autonomy of the judgment of taste. This was quite a revolutionary thought in Kant's time and possibly unthinkable from a rationalistic point of view. Although the concept of 'sensibility' (*Sinnlichkeit*) was still characterised with an empirical-psychological interest, here, we can already see its transition into the notion of '*Gefühl*', which Kant later termed and understood (Kantian notion of *Gefühl*): 'Aber was kritisiert denn das was allgemein gefällt? Ist es der Verstand? Nein, sondern die durch Erfahrung geübte Sinnlichkeit.'<sup>28</sup> At the end of this earlier consideration, Kant summarises: 'Es gibt also gewisse gemeine Gesetze der Sinnlichkeit in Ansehung der Form. . . .'<sup>29</sup> Here, the application of the notion of 'form' is very interesting; it will become typical in the later context of transcendental philosophical perspective, emphasising the communicability of the beautiful with regard to the subject, thus, no longer being exclusive in respect to the object (in the sense of empiricism). In 'Reflektionen zur Ästhetik' no. 672 (which Kant must have written it between 1769 and 1770), the notion of form comes closer to the investigation of categories of time and space, which was significant for the *Critique of Pure Reason*. ' . . . was also der Regel der Koordination in Raum und Zeit gemäß ist, das gefällt notwendig jedermann und ist schön.'<sup>30</sup> In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant dedicates himself to the problem of

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105. Trans. 'What pleases universally pleases in twofold: 1.) according to the laws of sensibility; that is beautiful and pleases in its appearance. 2.) according to the laws of understanding; that is good and pleases in concepts.'

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106. Trans. 'But what, then, criticises that which pleases universally? Is it understanding? No, but it is sensibility which is trained (developed) by experience.' In the *Critique of Judgment* § 3. 45., Kant distinguishes sensation from feeling (*Gefühl*), explaining ' . . . the word sensation is used to denote an objective representation of sense; and, to avoid continually running the risk of misinterpretation, we shall call that which must always remain purely subjective, and is absolutely incapable of forming a representation of an object, by the familiar name of feeling.' We can conclude that feeling is therefore a subjective sensation by which no object is represented whereas objective sensation is a perception of an object through our senses.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107. Trans. 'There are then particular universal laws of sensibility in regard to the form.'

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97. Trans. 'That which corresponds to the rule of co-ordination in space and time pleases necessarily every one and is beautiful.'

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universal validity of judgment of taste with a pure transcendental-philosophical interest. He proposes that it ought to be fundamentally possible to combine the judgment of taste with the claim to universality, and he indeed claims to have discovered a solution to this problem in order to justify his thesis of 'subjective universality' in the 'Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments'. So how does Kant arrive at a subjective universal validity as the distinct quality of pure aesthetic judgment? First, his initial point of departure was from the attitude of disinterestedness towards the object (what is to be called beautiful), and the ability of the subject to experience that disinterestedness within a feeling of freedom (*Gefühl der Freiheit*). Since Kant presumes that the feeling of being free (*sich-frei-fühlen*) – what we experience when we judge (or criticise) – can not be only a private condition, he conceived that there ought to be then a corresponding objective side to the mere subjective. The subject that experiences this freedom while making an aesthetic judgment must consequently '... believe that he has reason for demanding a similar delight from every one. Accordingly he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a quality of the object and the judgment logical'.<sup>31</sup> Universal validity is deduced from the primary premise of aesthetic freedom which is experienced by everyone who is in the state of disinterestedness. 'For where any one is conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest, it is inevitable that he should look on the object as one containing a ground of delight for all men.'<sup>32</sup> The *logical* judgment, which is based on concepts, has an incontestable claim of universal validity. In contrast, the *aesthetic* judgment does not have any evidence for its claim, and therefore its claim can only be subjective: 'i.e. there must be coupled with it a claim to subjective universality.'<sup>33</sup> The form of the judgment of taste suggests that we are dealing with logical judgment; however, since aesthetic judgment does not constitute itself on the basis of a concept, it can justify its claim for universal validity merely provisionally by its similarity (in form) to logical judgment. Thus, Kant writes, 'The beautiful is that which, apart from concepts is represented as the object of a universal delight'.<sup>34</sup> It is already evident that logical judgment is not identical with aesthetic experience: 'Now clearly in our experience of the beautiful, in nature and in art, we neither verify our expectations, nor record what we encounter as a particular case of the

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<sup>31</sup> CJ § 6. 51.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, § 6. 50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, § 6. 51.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, § 6. 50.

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universal'.<sup>35</sup> Compared to the cognitive judgment, what is formed through understanding with the aid of a concept, the mechanism of subordination under the universal, does not take place in aesthetic judgment. Gadamer writes: 'The point. . . is precisely that the dynamic of aesthetic delight comes into play without a process of conceptualisation, that is, without our seeing or *understanding something "as something"*'.<sup>36</sup> Although Gadamer emphasises the subjective ability of experiencing the beautiful, we have to point out that this is not an exhaustive description of the aesthetic judgment according to Kant. It is absolutely necessary to say that Kant is also concerned – although it is in a restricted way – with the reference to the object of our aesthetic experience. According to his thesis, there are two very important aspects: on the one side, he puts the feeling (*Gefühl*) of the pure subjective experience opposite to cognition (*Erkenntnis*), and on the other, he says that each aesthetic affection must assign to an object. Although aesthetic judgments have a formal similarity to logical judgments and participate in understanding (*Verstand*), they are not provable; yet despite this fact, they claim to be valid for every one. Consequently, aesthetic judgments cannot be 'true' or 'false' according to Kant's logic. This connects them with the ideas of reason which also lack objective application. This ambiguity of the judgment upon the beautiful, between its form (singular, categorical judgment: 'x is beautiful.') and its function (in terms of universal validity) distinguishes it from the judgments upon the agreeable and the good. A comparison of the beautiful with the agreeable and the good, based on the criterion of quantity, shows that the agreeable is rooted in private feelings, and the judgment upon it is restricted to the person who is judging upon it: Something is agreeable to *me*, we should say more accurately. 'With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Everyone has his own taste (that of senses)'.<sup>37</sup> However, the beautiful is diametrically opposed to this. It would be 'ridiculous' to say that something is beautiful to me. Whoever is judging upon the beautiful ' . . . judges not merely for himself, but for all men, and speaks of the beauty as if it were a property of things'.<sup>38</sup> The judgment upon the beautiful demands the agreement of every one. If every one would have their own taste, we could not speak about taste at all. 'This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste, i.e. no aesthetic judgment

<sup>35</sup> Gadamer. *Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. op. cit., 16.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> CJ § 7. 52.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

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capable of making a rightful [justified] claim upon the assent of all men.<sup>39</sup> An agreement within the judgment of the agreeable is possible, however, that agreement has to be recognised as contingent; hence the beautiful is the object of necessary delight. Kant emphasises that this kind of universality is understood in a comparative sense. The rules we apply are, like all empirical rules, just general and not universal as in the judgment of the beautiful.

Finally, the universal delight of the good derives from a concept: '... good is only represented as an object of universal delight *by means of a concept*, which is the case neither with the agreeable nor the beautiful.'<sup>40</sup> 'In a judgment of taste the universality of delight is only represented as subjective.'<sup>41</sup> Here, Kant refers in particular to the transcendental-philosophical aspect of his critique. He examines: 1.) Is it right to demand that the judgment of taste upon the beautiful should be valid for every one without being founded on concepts? A positive answer to this question consequently results in the separation of the judgment of the beautiful from both the 'taste of senses' (*Sinnen-Geschmack*) in respect to the agreeable and the 'taste of reflection' (*Reflexions-Geschmack*) in respect to the good. 2.) Kant examines the reference of these aesthetic judgments (taste of sense, taste of reflection) to the feelings of pleasure and displeasure. As he mentioned before, universality is also possible in the case of the agreeable, i.e. the taste of sense and universality of the taste of reflection, which, as experience teaches, does not always meet general approval – that is, the often experienced phenomenon of the diversity of sensual taste. Apart from such remarks based on an empirical ground/foundation, Kant concludes 3.) that universality of the judgment of taste does not rest upon concepts of the object, and therefore it is in no way logical but aesthetic. This kind of universality does not involve any objective quantity of the judgment but one which is only subjective. In contrast to objective universal validity, subjective universal validity is based on the reference to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. To round up, his transcendental philosophical examination Kant refers to the delight mediated without concepts as expression of an 'universal voice'<sup>42</sup> It remains still unclear what Kant exactly means by this notion, yet nevertheless it should show an idea, which guarantees the possibility of an aesthetic judgment, that is respected universally. Thus 'universal voice'

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, § 7. 53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, § 8. 53.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, § 8. 56.

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denotes a transcendental philosophical dimension which is independent from empirical facts. It describes taste as someone's own certain taste contrary to fashion that is subjugated to an empirical universality. 'Against the tyranny exercised by fashion, sure taste preserves a specific freedom and superiority.'<sup>43</sup> Thus certainly in taste has a subjective effect and refers to the universal voice in which taste is confirmed. The universal voice does not necessarily correspond to fashion, but makes it possible to find a judgment free and independent from it. This freedom is rooted in the practice of disinterestedness, what characterises the quality of the judgment of taste. Within the framework of the 'investigation of the question of the relative priority in a judgment of taste of the feeling of pleasure and the estimating of the object',<sup>44</sup> Kant speaks for the first time in terms of the constellation of cognitive powers, which have in common all subjects who are about to make an aesthetic judgment, as being engaged in a free play. The stimulation of cognitive powers in a (state of) free play is the source of the subjective universal communicability and causes sensations of pleasure and delight which find their expression in the judgment of taste. 'The quickening of both faculties (imagination and understanding) to an indefinite . . . harmonious activity, such as belongs to cognition generally, is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste.'<sup>45</sup> Thus pleasure is originated in the initial representation. But it is very important to emphasise that the mental state of pleasure, as a free play of cognitive powers, does not refer to the object by means of a concept when we are making an aesthetic judgment. However, it refers to the subject and is in correspondence with the universal voice. 'Definition of the beautiful drawn from the Second Moment. The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally.'<sup>46</sup> In asserting an aesthetic judgment of taste, the subject, in order to authenticate the universality of his judgment, must assess and confirm in reflection through judgment that the pleasure which the object has occasioned is 'disinterested' pleasure rather than moral or agreeable pleasure. Hence, judgments of taste are reflective.

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<sup>43</sup> TM 36 / WM 35

<sup>44</sup> CJ § 9. 57.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, § 9. 60.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



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### § 1.3 The Third Moment

The 'Third Moment' of the Analytic of the Beautiful is concerned with the relation of the ends brought under review in judgments of taste. We have already seen that, according to Kant, judgments of taste have a subjective foundation and are, therefore, different from cognitive judgments. The accessibility of the object in relation to the subject can merely be described as representation of the object. Thus, the problem of finality or purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) which is a central one for the *Critique of Judgment* can be explained as followed:

But that subjective side of a representation *which is incapable of becoming an element of cognition*, is the *pleasure or displeasure* connected with it; for through it I cognise nothing in the object of the representation, although it may easily be the result of the operation of some cognition. . . in the finality, therefore, which is prior to the cognition of an Object, . . . we have the subjective quality belonging to it that is incapable of becoming a constituent of knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

As it is explored in the previous chapter, the aesthetic judgment is intrinsically different from a cognitive one. While a cognitive judgment refers to the Object as representation and ascribes with the aid of its cognitive capacities a concept to it, the aesthetic judgment, too, refers to an Object, but this Object only communicates itself as subjective sensation, that is, as the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the subject, and therefore we have no concept of it. The representation of the Object complies with cognitive judgment if the laws of understanding (*Gesetzmäßigkeiten des Verstandes*) are applicable, whereas the representation of an object complies with an aesthetic judgment if the object affects the subject through the idea of formal finality (*formale Zweckmäßigkeit*). Thus, Kant can state:

The consciousness of mere formal finality in the play of the cognitive faculties of the Subject attending a representation whereby an object is given, is the pleasure itself, because it involves a determining ground of the Subject's activity in respect of the quickening of its cognitive powers, and thus an internal causality (which is final) in respect of cognition generally, but without being limited to definite cognition, and consequently a mere form of the subjective finality of a representation in an aesthetic judgment.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, § VII. 29.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, § 12. 64.

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What does it, then, imply to speak of the finality of the beautiful? How does finality determine the aesthetic response to the object more precisely? These questions refer to 'beautiful' as a relative predicate in the aesthetic judgment. In the framework of this examination, terms like 'representation' and 'feeling of pleasure or displeasure' will be central, which already indicates the subjective implications of the answer. Finality, according to Kant, is not the characteristic or quality of the beautiful Object but rather describes the attitude we have towards the beautiful Object (as well as toward the whole world), or, more precisely, finality is to be described as a typical pre-figuration of the subjects cognitive capacities judging aesthetically in view of a particular Object. With respect to the critical systematic enterprise by Kant, finality fulfils the transcendental-philosophical demand, which he put forward for an a priori principle which constitutes the fundament of judgment (*Urteilkraft*). As a point of departure, Kant is preoccupied with the notion of feeling (*Gefühlsbegriff*). In the Preface of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant describes the difficulties about a principle a priori (*Verlegenheit wegen eines Prinzips*) which has to be in immediate connection to the feelings of pleasure and displeasure.<sup>49</sup> That judgment has to have its own principles 'upon which laws are sought, although one merely subjective a priori',<sup>50</sup> was only an assumption for Kant. The immediate delight of the beautiful which Kant explored in his critique of aesthetic judgment, out of the direct connection to the feeling of pleasure, is already documented by him as a central issue in the above mentioned logic lecture: 'Das Schöne gefällt unmittelbar. Es gefällt mittelbar insofern es zu einem anderen Zweck der uns gefällt ein Mittel ist.'<sup>51</sup> In his letter to Carl Leonhard Reinhold (December 28, 1787), Kant assumes already the different quality of the a priori principle in the judgment of taste and explicates it later in his *Critique of Judgment* as subjectively founded. The principle of 'formal' finality corresponds with the 'as if' of aesthetic judgment, which was introduced for the first time in the 'Second Moment' concerning the quantity of judgment of taste.<sup>52</sup> In the focused mediation between the concept of nature and the concept of freedom (*Vermittlung zwischen Natur - und Freiheitsbegriff*) the concept of finality (for judgment) is distinguished from both the former and the latter and claims as a subjective principle to have a middle position between

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Preface (to first ed.), 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Introduction III. 15.

<sup>51</sup> The quote is taken from Jens Kulenkampff's *Materialien zu Kants 'Kritik der Urteilkraft'*, op. cit., 101. Here, I use my own translation: 'The beautiful pleases us immediately. It pleases mediately in so far it is a mean to an end which pleases us'.

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them '... this transcendental concept of finality of nature is neither a concept of nature nor of freedom, since it attributes nothing at all to the object, i.e. to nature, but only represents the unique mode in which we must proceed in our reflection upon the objects of nature with a view to getting a thoroughly interconnected whole of experience, and so is a subjective principle, i.e. maxim, of judgment.<sup>53</sup> In §10 'finality in general', Kant differentiates the notion of finality (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) from the notion of ends (*Zweck*). While an end is defined as the object of a concept so far as this concept is regarded as the cause of the object (the real ground of its possibility), the notion of finality describes in general the causality of a concept in respect of its object. The notion of end is, according to this definition, more restricted than the notion of finality. Kant states, 'Finality, therefore, may exist apart from an end. . . insofar we. . . are able to render the explanation of its possibility intelligible to ourselves only by deriving it from a will.'<sup>54</sup> This important passage should be better elucidated. Under an end, we understand that that which man sets himself with the power of his will and for its realisation, he commits himself with the aid of appropriate means. Kant imagines in it the effect as the determining ground for its cause. Ends are determined according to a particular action whereby the result we anticipate determines that specific action. On the contrary, judgments of finality are those which judge certain activities or objects under the presupposition of precise ends whether they contribute to that end or not. Thus, both judgments have a relation to causality in common. In the finality of aesthetic judgment, the precise end is not a concept, which is authenticated in the object perceived, but takes only into account its possibility. The causality of aesthetic finality merges in the attitude of the subject, i.e. in its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. This kind of delight or pleasure has to be understood in terms of permanence and not as a ephemeral state of consciousness. This permanence is coupled with the will being interested to preserve this present state. Kant states, therefore, that there are objects where we cannot speak of ends produced by the subject but which can only be explored by assuming or anticipating a will, which provides order according to a certain or specific end. While intended acts are expression of the good and realise, therefore, a *finality coupled with an end*, we find in natural objects, for instance a *finality without end or a purposiveness without purpose*, that is, the characteristics of their

<sup>52</sup> Compare also Introduction IV. 19. of *Critique of Judgment* '... by this concept nature is represented as if an understanding contained the ground of the unity of the manifold of its empirical laws.'

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction V. 23.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, § 10. 62.

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organism is only explainable through a hypothesis of finality. Hence, the validity of this relation of finality (finality-relation) is, compared to the laws of reason, restricted. By comparing the forms of judgment in ethics and aesthetics, it seems that they are incompatible in view of the end – finality distinction. Whereas in moral judgments the end of morality is decisive (determinant), aesthetic judgments are without interest and without ends. Despite their formal similarity, judgments of the beautiful and judgments of the good are to an extent different, as the latter refer precisely to a specific end and the former are only founded by assuming a finality, that is, an ‘as if end’. With an application of these observations regarding the finality of the agreeable, we can summarise that ‘the finality of the sensuous charming (of the agreeable) that contributes to the satisfaction of sensuous enjoyment – which is to be wished as its end – is similar to the morally commanded – which will appreciate an appropriate act or reality to it as useful i.e. final – but is contrary to the finality in judgments of taste, which invariably has the form of an ‘as if’. The assumption of ends in objects of nature, this includes works of art, too, as we shall see, derives from the feeling of freedom (for which we cannot give any reasons) by judging something aesthetically. The end with which we work hypothetically in the judgment of taste represents itself in that way as if freedom were to be wished or wanted. In this concern, the notion of finality is of indispensable importance for Kant since it completes the system of his whole critical enterprise. It bridges the concept of nature and the concept of freedom, and in addition, concurrently, fulfils the task of satisfying a subjective a priori of the judgment of taste and justifies therein the possibility of the third Kantian critique in transcendental intention (*transzendentaler Absicht*).<sup>55</sup> To speak of finality in terms of a form of principle concerning the beautiful implies that there is neither a real will involved nor a specific end thought, but that the finality only refers to the formal determinance of the beautiful object, which is given in a representation. In other words, ‘... beauty denotes a harmony of faculties (the form of finality) which we refer to an object (it is “in an object”), but only to the finality of form in the object – by contrast with, and so “without the presentation” of an end and its appurtenant finality.’<sup>56</sup> The form of aesthetically given objects is, therefore, to be distinguished from its matter. The form stands under the rules of the co-ordination in space and time but is distinguished from the conceptual determinance of the object. The formal finality contains a formal causality, which

<sup>55</sup> Manfred Höffe. *Immanuel Kant*. p. 262.

<sup>56</sup> Kemal. op. cit., 61.

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comprehends every single cause and effect relationship and has, therefore, the universal task to leave all possibilities open. Formal finality takes only the form of the object and treats them formally and concretises therein the absolute freedom of aesthetic judgment. Finality of judgment communicates, thus, a relationship between nature (art) and man. It is a transcendental principle that says something about the possibilities (a priori) i.e. about the conditions under which things can become objects of cognition. Moreover, finality evinces that which is left undetermined by understanding. Finality, therefore, transcends understanding (*Verstand*). The form of the beautiful results in the autonomous form of actualising something which goes beyond the sensuous, but this is not identified by Kant with some super-sensual, as something divine, but is formulated as something transcendental.

Hitherto we have traced Kant's formulation of aesthetics and his claim for an a priori principle for aesthetic judgments by confining ourselves to the 'Analytic of the Beautiful'. And to this point, what we have discovered is that Kant basically establishes an autonomy for the judgment of taste, which is analogous to theoretical and practical judgments, by 'subjectivising' the experience of the beautiful. We should be clear, however, that subjectivisation here does not simply imply the kind of subjective reaction associated with feelings of pleasure or displeasure deriving from mere sensations (of smell, taste, texture, sound or sight), which always vary from individual to individual. By subjective, Kant rather refers to the similar subjective conditions which must hold true for every individual in order to legitimate the universal validity of the judgment of taste. As we have shown, Kant's investigation is clearly transcendental since he searches for the conditions which provide the possibility to judge something as beautiful, i.e. to give a pure aesthetic value. However, because the judgment of taste is aesthetic and is therefore not based on any definite concepts but on feelings (*Gefühl*) alone, one has to assume that if the judgment of taste is to be universally communicable, 'the accordance of a representation with these conditions of the judgment must admit of being assumed valid a priori for everyone' (CJ § 38. p. 146-7). Kant, we explained, saw this condition in the formal 'subjective finality of the representation in the mind of the subject intuiting'<sup>57</sup> a particular object, and he understood beauty therefore as the 'form of the finality of an object'. Essentially, we demand from every one 'the pleasure or subjective finality of the representation in respect of the relation of the cognitive faculties [the free harmonious play

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between imagination and understanding] engaged in the estimate of a sensible object in general' (§ 38, p. 147).

What we must keep in mind is that the a priori principle, which Kant claimed, does not determine the *interpretandum* but rather guides one's reflection upon the given particular. Whether or not the nature of the *interpretandum* is itself concrete is of no concern in the aesthetic experience. For the pleasure that emerges during or through this reflective process does not reside within the quality of an object, but is rather the effect of a harmonious interaction between the cognitive faculties (imagination and understanding), which must be created by the judging individual within him or herself. As opposed to pleasure accompanied by sensations, the pleasure we feel in the beautiful is the consequence of our mental activity, i.e. the free interplay between imagination and understanding when estimating an object (*Beurteilung des Gegenstandes*). In other words, the beauty of an object we find in aesthetic contemplation, that is, in the mental activity of reflection, is never the beauty of the object as a thing-in-itself, i.e. as an absolute quality; instead, it is something that can only be thematised as an object of the subjective consciousness in a transcendental explanation. The beauty of an object is therefore not immediately perceivable but has to be created in contemplation/reflection. A certain *sujet* is purposive not because it fulfils a particular wish or private purpose of the judging individual or because it serves a certain aim or end; instead, it is purposive if the object is suitable to be contemplated upon or, as Kant puts it, if the object is 'purposive for reflection'. In all, Kant characterises the aesthetic purposiveness as 'purposiveness without purpose', which should establish the necessary and pleasurable relation between an object and the judging individual. The *interpretandum* and its qualities are as a result always determined in relation to a subject that constitutes them, and are therefore not independently given apart from a subjective consciousness. Consequently they gain the status of phenomena in relation to a subject, i.e. their qualities are modification of subjective consciousness. To put it in simpler terms, the reality of such phenomena is always constituted in relation to a cogniser and lies therefore, at all times, within this relation. And since such relation is constituted through an a priori principle, these phenomena are essentially distinguished from mere appearance (*bloßer Schein*) and private imaginations. In other words, contrary to arbitrary and capricious imaginations, these phenomena emerge from universal, a priori conditions. Therefore, if one claims that

<sup>57</sup> CJ § 15, 70.

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something is beautiful, it must hold true that everyone else should pass a similar judgment on the given object since the subjective conditions through which one perceives that very object are in principle the same for everyone. The capacity to judge something to be beautiful as universally valid judgment, i.e. taste, can therefore be assumed on the basis of a *sensus communis aestheticus*, which does not merely describe an empirical sense but a universal capacity of reflection. From this capacity of reflection emerges the peculiar feeling of pleasure, which finds its expression in the aesthetic judgment. Since the judging individual is not conscious of a concept in this reflection but realises the formal subjective purposiveness only with the aid of a certain constellation of his/her cognitive capacities, i.e. in the awareness of the feeling of pleasure, aesthetic judgments can not be objectively proved (by a concept) but can only be verified through the very experience. Their claim for validity is therefore restricted to a subjective universality.

### § 1.4 Fourth Moment

In the fourth and final moment of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' Kant's primary interests lie in developing the modality or necessity of pure judgments of taste and so clarify further the subjective universality that such judgments claim. He writes in §18 'what we have in mind in the case of the beautiful is a necessary reference on its part to delight'.<sup>38</sup> The implication here is that the delight in the beautiful is necessarily shared by all subjects, i.e. it has a universal character. If we recall, in the First Moment Kant explains that delight in the agreeable is always coupled with interest. As such, the pleasure arising from the agreeable is contingent and therefore cannot claim universality. However, in contrast, Kant maintains that the delight in the beautiful can claim universality since this type of pleasure is devoid of all interest, i.e., it is 'disinterested pleasure' which we can expect every subject to share since it derives from the 'finality of form of finality' which renders the same capacity to respond in a like manner to all. The universality of aesthetic judgments, moreover, is neither determined by moral compulsion, which, like the agreeable, depends on interest or by causal necessity, which contends that pleasure is caused by the object of perception. Judgment of taste, Kant postulates, is wholly independent of interest and is occasioned by the subjects, not the objects.

What is more, Kant asserts that the judgment of taste has an 'exemplary validity'. He explains that 'it [exemplary validity] is a necessity of the assent of *all* to a judgment

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regarded as exemplifying a universal rule incapable of formulation.<sup>59</sup> The reason for the incapability to formulate a universal rule of course lies in the fact that the rule is merely a subjective rule, since that which the predicate 'beautiful' refers to is a subjective matter, i.e. the inner feeling or sensation belong to the subject. Therefore the status of a pure judgment of taste can be described as having exemplary validity for every one. In all of its cases it represents an example which confirms a universal but unconceptualisable rule. Nevertheless one cannot count on that agreement definitively since the rule which determines the correct subsumption is not explicable in terms of objectivity. We already know from the Second Moment that the kind of universality involved in the pure judgment of taste is 'subjective' rather than 'objective'. Whereas judgments with a claim to subjective universality are communicable and valid for every judging subject, judgments with the claim to objective universality hold good for every object of the same kind. Let us clarify this by illustrating an example. When we say 'this rose is beautiful', then this judgment is subjectively universal since it holds good for all judging subjects, but not for all roses. In contrast when we say 'all roses have thorns', then this judgment holds not only true for all judging subjects but for all roses as well since thorns are an objective quality of all roses. In the latter case we have an example of an objective cognitive judgment since the necessity of this judgment is derived from a definitive concept, i.e. the concept of a rose. But as we can see, in the former case, we do not have such a definitive concept, and thus it is not apodictic. Hence, we can conclude that judgments of taste concern individuals and are singular. And although they are devoid of any concept, there is still a necessity of the assent of all.

In §19 Kant emphatically makes clear that the necessity of aesthetic judgments, even if it is exemplary, is much more than an expectation or imputation. Although Kant never left any doubt about the binding or compulsory character of the judgment of taste, he now says '[A] person who describes something as beautiful insists that every one *ought* to give the object in question his approval and follow suit in describing it as beautiful.'<sup>60</sup> But Kant does not simply assign validity to a subject's own pleasure, he requires 'in the sense of *justifiably demands*, an agreement from others'.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, he goes on to say that

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., § 18. 81.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., § 19. 82.

<sup>61</sup> Kemal. op. cit., 64.



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'[t]he *ought* in aesthetic judgments . . . is still only pronounced conditionally.'<sup>62</sup> He states, '[w]ere judgments of taste (like cognitive judgments) in possession of a definitive objective principle, then one who in his judgment followed such a principle would claim unconditioned necessity for it.'<sup>63</sup> In the case of sensual judgment of taste one does not claim necessity at all since this kind of judgment (judgment of the agreeable for instance) is not represented as an object of a universal delight by means of a concept. As we have indicated above the same holds true in respect to the beautiful (incapability to formulate the rule!) but in contrast to the judgment of the agreeable, judgments of taste rightly assert a claim to universal validity. In contrast to the judgment of the agreeable the absence of an concept in the judgment of taste does not destroy the self-certainty of the judging subject and does not diminish or invalidate the claim for universality. Therefore Kant concludes 'they must have a subjective principle, and one which determines what pleases or displeases, by means of feeling only and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity'.<sup>64</sup> As we have seen in the Second Moment this subjective principle is determined as the free play of the cognitive powers of imagination and understanding. Kant's main interest here is to emphasise that the mental state, i.e. feeling of pleasure which constitutes the judgment of taste, is a feeling which different individuals can have in the same way. The universal validity of this feeling, i.e. the possibility that every one can have this feeling is expressed in the notion of a common sense. According to Kant the necessity of the universal assent to judgments of taste is only thinkable under the presupposition of a common sense. That is, he shows that a 'universally valid but subjective experience is possible in the sense of transcendently justified, in the way that cognitive judgments are transcendently justified, by reference to common sense.'<sup>65</sup> Here, Kant distinguishes common sense which underlies as a subjective principle any judgment of taste from common understanding (*gemeinen Verstand*) which is also referred to as common sense. While the presupposed common sense in judgments of taste is entirely based on feelings, the latter is based on concepts. The question whether one has reason for presupposing a common sense, which Kant himself poses in § 21, he answers by drawing an analogy to cognitions and judgments in general. Kant states:

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<sup>62</sup> CJ § 19, 82.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, § 20, 82.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Kemal. op. cit.*, 65.

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[I]f cognitions are to admit of communication, then our mental state, i.e. the way the cognitive powers are attuned for cognition generally, and, in fact, the relative proportion suitable for a representation (by which an object is given to us) from which cognition is a result, must also admit of being universally communicated, as, without this, which is the subjective condition of the act of knowing, knowledge, as an effect, would not arise.<sup>66</sup>

One can say that Kant identifies common sense as the condition for the universal communicability of the mental state and hence also of feelings, so that the application of a common sense is from Kant's perspective well founded. With the assumption of a common sense underlying the judgment of taste, Kant shows that the necessary condition is already provided, making it generally possible to solicit every one else's assent. Put simply, Kant demonstrated that judgments of taste are transcendently possible. But this does not automatically imply that our imputation is also accepted when we actually make an particular judgment. Kant was apparently aware of this difficulty, and so he explicitly points out:

Now, for this purpose, experience cannot be made the ground of this common sense, for the latter is invoked to justify judgments containing an 'ought'. The assertion is not that every one *will* fall in with our judgment but rather that every one *ought* to agree with it.<sup>67</sup>

According to Kant, when one makes a particular actual judgment of taste, one puts forward one's own judgment of taste as an example of the presupposed common sense, consequently, attributing to it exemplary validity. 'Hence', Kant emphasises, 'common sense is a mere ideal norm. With this as presupposition, a judgment that accords with it, as well as the delight in an Object expressed in that judgment, is rightly converted into a rule for every one.'<sup>68</sup> But what does this mean? Although judgments of taste have only a subjective principle (principle of subjective necessity), it is nevertheless assumed to be universal in the sense that one, in the actual making of a judgment of taste, presupposes a common sense, i.e. the necessary idea to assume that one's feelings are universally communicable. The fact that one presupposes such a *sensus communis* justifies that one could demand universal assent concerning the different judging subjects as if judgments of taste were underlying an objective principle. Kant concludes the Fourth Moment with the

<sup>66</sup> CJ § 21. 83.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, § 22. 84.

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definition: The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognised as object of a necessary delight.

### § 1.5 Summary of the Four Moments of the *Third Critique*

The significance of the *Third Critique* is obviously the transcendental philosophical basis which Kant gave to aesthetics. By placing the necessary conditions for the judgment of taste within the subject, so as to legitimise the universal validity for this kind of judgment, Kant also established the autonomy of the judgment of taste, but only at the expense of suspending the concept of knowledge and truth from the aesthetic province. Although Kant saw the uniqueness of aesthetic judgment and preserved it to a suprahuman dimension, which manifests itself in freedom, he nevertheless failed, according to Gadamer, to accord any cognitive value to such judgments. Since the judgment of taste is not based on any concepts, Kant maintains in his *Third Critique* that no knowledge is imparted in the aesthetic realm and asserts, '[i]t is only through a logical judgment that we get knowledge'<sup>68</sup>. As we can see, Kant thus relegated the concept of knowledge and truth only to the theoretical and practical use of reason.<sup>69</sup>

The effect of Kant's new foundation for aesthetics cannot be underestimated. Kantian aesthetics made it impossible for those succeeding him to acknowledge a claim to truth in respect to the experiences of art, of philosophy and of history. As a consequence of his transcendental justification of aesthetic taste, all truth and theoretical knowledge were placed beyond the possible reach of the human sciences, subsequently, putting into question their legitimacy. The opening paragraph of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* raises this specific fundamental issue concerning the legitimacy of the human sciences vis-à-vis the overriding dominance of methodical thinking on the model of the natural sciences in contemporary culture. Compared to the natural sciences, Gadamer points out, the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) should not follow a methodological procedure appropriate to science. They neither employ the scientific method of induction nor appear to progress inductively in order to discover and increase our knowledge of comprehensive 'historical laws'. This lack of a methodical procedure, as previously indicated, has caused

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., § 15. 71.

<sup>70</sup> Gadamer argues in *Truth and Method* that the Cartesian idea of truth is inappropriate for grasping truth that is intrinsic to the human sciences; thus, it seems appropriate and significant that in the present chapter I examine the concept of truth and how Gadamer understands and applies this concept in relation to the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

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great alarm concerning scientific justifiability in the human sciences.<sup>71</sup> For many thinkers the absence of method puts into doubt how one can legitimise the truth claim in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, i.e. in the aesthetic or the historical experience. If method is not the vehicle through which we arrive at the presumed truth in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, what does Gadamer purpose as the truth criterion that can be taken as the basis of scientificity for the human sciences? This question subsequently seems to presuppose the controversial problem concerning the definition of truth and how one is to attain such a truth.

### § 2. A Brief Historical Overview of Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics

In the sciences of the post-Kantian era, methodology discovered great vitality. The Age of Romanticism provided vast fertile grounds for the natural sciences to flourish. New discoveries and advancements in mathematical and physical sciences fuelled the optimistic belief that adherence to strict sciences could indeed disclose absolute truth. Against such a backdrop, the need to justify the human sciences as a science became evermore pressing, and out of this need for legitimisation, the *Geisteswissenschaften* witnessed the advent of modern hermeneutics, which for the most part adopted the methodical rationality of the natural sciences in search for a programmatic method to discover absolute truth. Here we shall examine three major hermeneutics of the nineteenth century and the turning point of modern hermeneutics, Martin Heidegger.

#### § 2.1 Schleiermacher's Grammatical Exegesis with Psychological Interpretation

Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), credited as being the progenitor of modern hermeneutics, realised in textual interpretations (such as the Bible and the classics) an inherent problem of understanding. Because his theory of interpretation opens with the premise that 'strict interpretation begins with misunderstanding', Schleiermacher envisioned the development of a universal hermeneutic program which could parry

<sup>71</sup> It must be admitted that Gadamer does not wish to omit method completely from the human sciences. Time and time again, he acknowledges the need for methodical work within the *Geisteswissenschaften*. In his essay 'Truth in the Human Sciences' (op. cit., 26), Gadamer states: 'Certainly, the application of methods also belongs to the works of the human sciences. They distinguish themselves from popularised *belle lettre* through a certain verifiability'. Another example is in a 1993 interview with Carsten Dutt where Gadamer freely admits that there are methods – methods to be used as 'tools' (*Werkzeuge*) – in studying the humanities. These so-called 'tools', as he explains, must be learned and applied; however, they are by no means absolute in the sense of 'scientific method' nor do they alone make up the scientificity of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Gadamer's interest is not the negation of method in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, but rather his concern lies in 'qualifying' the concept of method in order to evoke a consciousness that reaches beyond the methodological self-understanding of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. See *Hermeneutik, Ästhetik Praktische Philosophie: Hans-Georg Gadamer im Gespräch*. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), pp. 15-16.

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misunderstandings in the act of interpretation. He called for a critical program, which exhausts the comprehension of language. By and large, he devised a theory for textual interpretation, which includes two main divisions, a 'grammatical side' on the one hand and a 'psychological side' of interpretation on the other. The grammatical aspect of interpretation, of course, concerns the usage of language in its totality, that is, in terms of its form, structure, dialect and the like, whereas the psychological involves the task of transposing oneself imaginatively back to the original situation (i.e. historical and psychological) in which the author conceived his/her work, thereby reconstructing not only the author's intentions and purposes but also the impelling force which created his/her desire to say something. This then permits the interpreter to understand the text as well as and then even better than its author. These two forms of interpretation, as conceived by Schleiermacher, work to complement and check one another and function within the hermeneutic circle of whole and part. In grammatical interpretation, a text is dissected to its very essence until the meaning of each word is understood in context of the sentence to which it belongs. The meaning of the sentence is then determined in respect to the work as a whole, which then leaves the work to be comprehended in terms of its linguistic usage and literary genre. Conversely, the meaning of the whole is constituted by its part, i.e. its sentences and words. This dialectical relationship between the whole and part, hence, describes what Schleiermacher explains as the hermeneutic circle. For its part, the psychological aspect of interpretation also involves a similar dialectical relationship insofar as the work is placed in context of the author's life and the history of the time while concurrently reconstructing an overall interpretation from the various individual experiences and aims of the author. Schleiermacher's bipartite conception of hermeneutics thus functions in the way that 'Grammatical interpretation complements psychological interpretation by fixing the exact meaning of the author's words and eliciting a comprehension of the language as the author knew it, while psychological interpretation complements grammatical interpretation by exploring the life – context in which the work was generated'.<sup>72</sup>

Prior to Schleiermacher, 'hermeneutics' was simply an interpretative instrument employed by Scripture scholars who were preoccupied with the understanding of the Bible. After the Protestant Reformation, the dispute between Catholic and Lutheran scriptural interpretation became a controversial problem in relation to the proper understanding of the

<sup>72</sup> Georgia Warnke's *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*. (Polity Press, 1987), p. 14.

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Bible. On the one hand, the Catholic view of interpretation maintained that the correct understanding of the Bible is dependent on the testimony of *tradition* and authority of the old Church Fathers. However, on the other hand, Martin Luther's reforming acts dissented from the Catholic reliance on tradition and authority by presupposing that the true criterion for proper interpretation of the Bible lies in the principle of *sola scriptura*. That is to say that Luther 'rediscovered the until then forgotten self-evidence of Scripture.'<sup>73</sup> Hence, Scripture is *sui ipsius interpres*, according to Luther.

Thus hermeneutics, which preceded Schleiermacher, simply dealt with the validation of scriptural text and situations where understanding was not self-evident. On the whole, it possessed only a limited scope and was hardly considered as a methodology appropriate for understanding in general. However, Schleiermacher's contributions marked a significant change in the history of hermeneutics. First of all, his presupposition that misunderstanding is the point of departure for every understanding, universalised misunderstanding 'as the situation and occasion of interpretation'.<sup>74</sup> He thus explains, 'The business of hermeneutics cannot begin merely when the faculty of understanding becomes uncertain of itself; rather it is involved from the very beginning in the endeavour to understand something said.'<sup>75</sup> For this reason, Schleiermacher conceptualises hermeneutics as the 'infinite task' of reconstructing from the ground up every foundation of grammar and expression of inwardness. The art of interpretation, as he envisions it, is an ongoing process for 'deeper interpretation'. However, since complete understanding is impossible (likewise the attempt to eliminate all misunderstandings is unrealisable), the goal of hermeneutics is not the attainment of absolute understanding, but rather of an improved and better understanding, i.e. interpretation which avoids misunderstandings. Schleiermacher's reconstruction of interpretative practices points toward a formal methodology. However, Schleiermacher himself refrains from offering specific guidelines or general 'methods' of interpretation. He rather emphasises that hermeneutics, especially the psychological side of interpretation, involves interpretative divination (*divinare*), i.e. guesswork. Although the grammatical aspect of interpretation provides useful insight for the understanding of a text, it is nevertheless the psychological side which Schleiermacher

<sup>73</sup> See Jean Grondin's *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, (trans. Joel Weinsheimer, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 40. The primacy of Scripture was nothing new to Luther, for it was already emphasised by St. Augustine in his *De doctrina christiana*. What Luther accomplished is the re-employment of the *sola scriptura* principle as the proper criterion for scriptural interpretations.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

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stresses as the central focus of interpretation. The interest of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is in the thought behind the words. However, since the interpreter can never know the exact thought of the author, divination is inescapable. In other words, 'At the point when the fundamentally comparative means of grammatical interpretation leave us at a loss – that is, when it is not the commonness but the uniqueness of a particular style that is to be elucidated – then often enough we simply have to guess what the author was trying to say'.<sup>76</sup> The task of developing a methodological procedure, i.e. devising a methodical exposition of rules governing interpretation, was therefore left open for his successors.

### § 2.2 Droysen and Understanding through Research

In the nineteenth century, historians, in their efforts to liberate themselves from Hegelian teleology, i.e., from the assumption that 'the history of the world is none other than the progress of consciousness of freedom', viewed history as an empirical science based on facts. They therefore reasoned that history had to be interpreted according to its own merits, independent of a priori principles. This view of history essentially pushed historians to broaden and transpose the theory of hermeneutic circle of whole and part, which Schleiermacher specifically reserved for textual interpretations, to understand the history of mankind as a whole.

In this basic schema of whole and part, every particular, historical phenomenon is conceptualised only in the context of the historical period to which it belongs. This in substance implies that every historical epoch is to be treated uniquely and understood as possessing its own internal meaning, that is, every historical event is to be judged immanently, as indicative of its time. However, for the historical sciences to justify their claim to truth, historians presupposed a need to employ a conceptual scheme, i.e. a methodology, not only to defend their discipline against the arguments of historical relativism but also to establish historical studies as 'sciences' equally standing with or comparable to the natural sciences.

Johann Gustave Droysen (1808-1884) was one of the earliest philosophical pioneers to attempt the task of developing a methodological system based on Schleiermacher's hermeneutical principles for understanding history. Droysen was well aware of the scientific revolution that was taking place in his own time, and he perceived

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<sup>76</sup> The quote from Schleiermacher is taken from Jean Grondin's translation found in *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 70.

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in the natural sciences a paradigm, that is, the utilisation of a method, for the historical sciences to emulate. Kant, for Droysen, was the model to follow: 'We need a Kant to provide [not merely a model for gathering] historical materials but a critical paradigm for theory and practice toward and in history.'<sup>77</sup> However, Droysen realises that the method needed for historical understanding must differ from that of the natural sciences, for in the historical sciences there is no self-givenness of experiment, that is, historical studies do not possess the opportunity to look at their *interpretandum* directly but rather rely on tradition, i.e. how historical events are handed down to us. Thus, for Droysen, the method of historical sciences consists in *understanding through research (forschend zu verstehen)*. This implies an intellectual reworking of the past, that is, a restless examining and re-examining of the inherited remains of the past. Historical sciences therefore endeavour in a ceaseless process of searching through the remains for new historical source materials and for ever new interpretations of them, which might offer new life to the past, broadening and deepening our understanding of the past and present. Droysen, therefore, points out that historical study 'does not merely repeat what has been handed down as history; instead, it must penetrate more deeply; it tries as far as possible to find whatever of the past is still left to be discovered; in the spirit of letting things come to life again and understanding them, it tries to create new sources, as it were'.<sup>78</sup>

In his endeavour to justify historical studies as an empirical science, Droysen introduces a recognisable universal commonality uniting every individual historical phenomenon together. As Droysen sees it, the notion of 'continuity of progressive historical work and production' provides the necessary universality needed to legitimise historical studies as an empirical science.<sup>79</sup> The continuity and coherence of history, he implies, lies in the movement towards moral and ethical progress. Thus Droysen explains that historical understanding is constituted by the understanding of the progressive development of moral powers throughout history. These moral powers express themselves in language, in science and in forms of communal life, such as family, community, church and states. They represent the outward expressions by which historical understanding of things 'inner' can be achieved. Moral powers supply historians, as Droysen claims, with

<sup>76</sup> Grondin, op. cit., 71.

<sup>77</sup> Due to the unavailability of Droysen's *Historik. Vorlesungen über die Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte* (published by R. Hübnert, Munich, 1937; Darmstadt 1977), Regrettably, I am forced to rely on Jean Grondin for the direct quotes found in *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 80.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.



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the essential questions necessary to search and re-search the moral significance of historical materials. They are to historian what laws are to the natural sciences.<sup>80</sup> Moral powers are the foundation of the nature of history and of the possibility of knowing it.<sup>81</sup> This suggests that the particular historical phenomenon or event has to be understood in relation to the entirety of its historical moral progress. For 'humanity is only the integrated totality of all these moral powers and forms, and every individual [exists] only in the continuity and community of these moral powers'.<sup>82</sup> Hence, historical understanding is none other than the progressive self-awareness and self-knowledge on the part of mankind.

For Droysen, individual utterance is to be understood within the context of the whole, and the whole from the individual. Here, we clearly notice an echoing of Schleiermacher. Droysen in fact adopts Schleiermacher's notion of understanding, insofar as he identifies historical understanding with the 'infinite task' of critically re-enacting or retracing history in an effort to become ever closer to understanding both the cause and genesis of the original historical utterances. The study of history, according to Droysen, is therefore comparable to the Schleiermacherian study of texts. However, to all intents and purposes, Droysen at length fails to establish a methodological system of investigating history that could equal the degree of methodological certainty belonging to the natural sciences. His notion of understanding through research seems hardly to justify itself to be called a methodology or to legitimate its claim to truth.

### § 2.3 Dilthey's Understanding Life from out of Life itself

The search for a methodological approach to the human sciences reaches its climax in the works of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Like Droysen, Dilthey set out to justify and secure history's claim to be a science. He, too, attempted to render an epistemological legitimacy for history by developing a methodological system, which could produce objective knowledge but avoid the reductionist, mechanistic, ahistorical explanatory schema of the natural sciences. In conceptualising history as an autonomous science, Dilthey's critical intent aimed to emancipate the historical sciences from the subordination to the natural science by formulating an independent, systematic and methodical foundation for the understanding of history and the human sciences in general.

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<sup>80</sup> TM 191 / WM 204

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 188 / 201

<sup>82</sup> Grondin. *op. cit.*, 82.

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The challenge of formulating such a methodology, for Dilthey (as it was for Leopold von Ranke and Johann Droysen), evolved from his critical opposition to the Hegelian philosophy of history. To Hegel history is, roughly speaking, a steadfast progression towards a higher rational purpose, an end that is beyond human individuals, but nonetheless involves their multifarious aims and activities, inasmuch as they are instrumental in bringing about the ultimate end. Hegel's emphasis on the rational character of history led to his view that history exists as a manifestation of the rational mind. In Hegelian terms, world history is the history of thought. However for Dilthey, such an account of history denies the significance of historical experiences. He, in contrast to Hegel, perceives a connection between experience and history, and therefore reasserts the necessity of experience in understanding history. If history is to be a legitimate science, it must be empirical, explains Dilthey. 'All science, all philosophy, is empirical science. All experience derives its coherence, and the validity conditioned by it from the coherence of human consciousness'.<sup>83</sup> But this opens the question, how is experience to offer historical understanding? To grasp how Dilthey closes the distance between experience and historical understanding, we first need to comprehend his concept of experience.

Dilthey was well aware of the fact that the empirical character of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is something quite dissimilar from that of the natural sciences, and he, therefore, distinguishes the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) grounding the *Geisteswissenschaften* from the scientific experience (*Erfahrung*) realised in investigative sciences. Through experience, natural phenomena are explained in terms of mathematical laws and rules in the natural sciences. However, associated with the *Geisteswissenschaften*, experience is acknowledged as the very mode of 'understanding': 'We explain nature, we understand mental life' (*Die Natur erklären wir, das Seelenleben verstehen wir*), says Dilthey.<sup>84</sup> In the field of modern critical sciences, experience is the result of discovering verifiable normative laws of observed phenomena. It, therefore, focuses on the repeatability of experimental results and the collection of observed data. Further, scientific experience entails objectivity, that is, detachment between the *interpretandum* and its investigator. In contrast, by *Erlebnis* or 'lived experience' Dilthey rather refers to something which 'deals with living connections of reality experienced in

<sup>83</sup> See Droysen, Wilhelm: *Collected Works*, vol. XIX 'The Foundation of the Sciences of Man, Society and History' (ed. H. Johouch and R. Rodi, 1982), p. 389.

<sup>84</sup> See Wilhelm Dilthey. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Band V: *Die Geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Leben*. (Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1924), p. 144.

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the mind'.<sup>85</sup> *Erlebnis*, in other words, is a living historical process, and since it evolves within the conscious mind of the subject, it, therefore, possesses a cognitive function. *Erlebnis* is undetachable from the individual consciousness, as consequence, producing only a 'subjective response'. That is, every instance of experience is contained within the individual consciousness and possesses an intuitive immediacy.

Dilthey's concept of experience in respect to the individual self reflects a 'happening' or an event or fusion of events, which stands apart as a coherent whole from the temporal flux of daily life. Experience in this instance not only represents an interruption to the normal routines observed in everyday living but also equates as meaning and provides intrinsic continuity and coherence to the individual life. It is, moreover, immediate and direct self-understanding, and yet concurrently belongs to the unity of the individual self-consciousness which experiences the particular experience and thus contains an inalienable and irreplaceable relation to the whole of this one life.<sup>86</sup> To be more precise, 'What an experience means is immediate, in the sense of not mediated by a concept, but for that very reason its meaning is not (in another sense) immediately apparent. Rather it constitutes itself in memory and self-reflection.'<sup>87</sup>

Life-history, as it were, revolves and unfolds around *Erlebnis*. The particularly significant experiences of an individual are the events from which the life-conduct of that individual is determined and shaped. Applied to the hermeneutic circle of whole and part, Dilthey's concept of *Erlebnis* can, therefore, be considered as an appropriate basis for comprehending the individual life, that is, one understands one's particular experiences within the context of the whole of one's life, and conversely the whole of one's life becomes understandable in respect to understanding one's particular experiences made throughout one's life. Hence, the concept of *Erlebnis* suggests an intrinsic connection to the individual self-understanding, which is to be understood as a process in constant motion, always open for revision and never complete. In order to provide a fixed basis by which he can legitimate the scientific character of history, Dilthey applies his concept of *Erlebnis* to historical understanding. But this leads to the all-important question: how is historical understanding possible under the premise of Dilthey's concept of *Erlebnis*? How can individual self-understanding, emanating through personal lived experiences, provide

<sup>85</sup> See *Dilthey Today: A Critical Appraisal of the Contemporary Relevance of His Work*. (London: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 108.

<sup>86</sup> TM 60 / WM 63

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the fundamental basis for historical understanding? Where does the connection lie between personal self-understanding and historical and social-scientific understanding?

What Dilthey proposes is that knowledge of history is acquired in similar fashion to self-knowledge. He suggests that the given coherency within an individual's life is similar to the given coherency in history insofar as in both instances, experience is the supplier of unity. Just as in the individual life, where one's particular experiences organises and governs the direction of one's life, so it is likewise in history that the particular historical events constitute and construct the movement of history. However, in the case of historical understanding it is the historian who undertakes and consumes himself in the task of interpreting and understanding historical events or 'happenings'. It is he who understands the wholes of our historicity. Since he observes and studies history and is himself a historical being, the historian, for Dilthey, possesses a superior historical sophistication, which enables him to think beyond what is already thought in life experience.<sup>88</sup> What this implies is that the historian, given his privileged insight, is able to relive and investigate the particular historical experiences, which provide continuity and make history intelligible. However, this seems to fragment the continuity between the experience of the historian and that of the individual. Further, it raises the question: how is the historian to surmount the limitations of his own historical situation, that is, as a historical being himself, how can he escape his own prejudices, tradition and particularity? And is his historicity not a hindrance to objectivity? It seems clear that in studying history, the identity or immediacy between the experiencing subject and the understanding subject is abolished, in the sense that one (the historian) is confronted with another individual's, community's or culture's experiences from which a coherence has to be formed, although one is not the subject who has made the experiences oneself. The historian, for instance, cannot experience 'immediately' what a particular individual is experiencing, nor for that matter the experience of every individual. Without the notion of immediacy, which Dilthey himself stresses, how can history be made coherent?

Dilthey recognises that experience and understanding differs from individual to individual, and so to bridge the gulf between individual experience and the experience which belongs to social and historical understanding, he appeals to Hegel's notion of *Geist* or spirit. *Geist*, for Dilthey, represents an over-arching or collective consciousness of

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<sup>87</sup> See Joel C. Weinsheimer. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 88. (Cited hereafter as GH.)

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society, which functions analogously to the individual consciousness. The individual experience no longer pertains merely to the particular self; rather it is subsumed in the *Geist*. Thus, Dilthey explains:

The individual experiences, thinks and acts constantly in a common sphere and only within such does he understand. In the same way, everything that is understood bears within itself the mark of being familiar in terms of this common sphere. We live in this atmosphere; it surrounds us constantly. We are immersed in it. We are everywhere at home in the historical and understood world, we understand the meaning and significance of everything. We are ourselves intertwined in these communalities.<sup>89</sup>

Insofar as the particular individual conforms and participates in the common cultural practices and modes of self-understanding, the individual reflects the larger whole to which he belongs through those 'communalities', and thus the experience of the one reflects the experience of the whole. Understanding of history, thus, derives from a dialogical interaction between the historical individual, i.e. the historian, and the historical world. The commonality of experience present in social and historical knowledge remains an ongoing process, ever revisable in reflection.

Although in his life-philosophy Dilthey endeavoured to abandon all notion of Hegel's speculative metaphysics, he nevertheless had to return to Hegel's notion of objective *Geist* in order to demonstrate the possibility of common experience and supply a connection between experience and understanding; that is, Dilthey had to find a way to explain how understanding of a particular historical event is possible although the experience is not authentic for the historian. It appears that he ultimately could not accept the fact that experience is historically and temporally conditioned, and this seems to indicate that the subsequently implied finitude of consciousness and the fear of the relativistic implications of his life-philosophy compelled Dilthey to return to the very speculative idealism for which he criticised Hegel.

However *Geist*, as Dilthey conceives it, differs somewhat in regards to Hegel's conception of 'absolute' *Geist*, which treats art, religion, philosophy and the like as forms

<sup>88</sup> TM 195-6 / WM 208

<sup>89</sup> See W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1970), p. 178. 'der einzelne erlebt, denkt und handelt stets in einer Sphäre von Gemeinsamkeit, und nur in einer solchen versteht er. Alles Verstandene trägt gleichsam die Marke des Bekanntseins aus solcher Gemeinsamkeit an sich. Wir leben in dieser Atmosphäre, sie umgibt uns beständig. Wir sind eingetaucht in sie. Wir sind in dieser geschichtlichen und

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of immediate truth, revealing suprahistorical knowledge. According to Dilthey, all knowledge is intrinsically historical, that is, all knowledge is rooted in 'real life', and as such, the disciplines of art, philosophy and religion exist simply as expressive forms of life. By divorcing truth from art, philosophy and religion, Dilthey implies that these 'expressions of life' are to be understood only in terms of tracing them back to the mental consciousness from which they originated. Here, we see at once that Dilthey essentially recurs to the 'psychological' aspect of interpretation relevant to the Schleiermacherian concept of hermeneutics. And again, we see the empathetic need to return to the past in order to discover the meaning behind the forms of expression, the 'inner word'. Moreover, Dilthey's claim that history is the single source of *unconditioned* certainty raises several other critical implications. It suggests, first, that historical knowledge is de-relativised from all experience. This means that Dilthey essentially disconnects history from its own foundation -- namely experience -- and places history outside the sphere of his life-philosophy. However, this diametrically opposes his earlier position that historical knowledge is never quite complete but ever unfolding within the circle of experience and understanding. By implying the absoluteness of historical knowledge, Dilthey virtually imposes a Cartesian standard of certainty by which to measure history. This subsequently means that the objectivity, which constitutes history as a science, is to be found not within history but outside it. But why does Dilthey supersede his insights of experience with Cartesian idealism? Ultimately, Dilthey could not escape his own preoccupations concerning the relativistic implications of his life-philosophy. He in fact could not overcome the self-doubt, which emanated from his commitment to Cartesian idealism, to accept the historicity of historical experiences. As a result of Descartes influence, Dilthey's understanding of history, at length, follows in the likeness of Hegel's speculative metaphysics, and one can surmise that it is Cartesian understanding of truth which in the end undermines Dilthey's entire project, that is, to legitimate the human sciences as a science.

In retrospect, Dilthey, on the one hand, bases his philosophy of life on *Erlebnis*, that is, lived experience, establishing the empirical character of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. This subsequently implies that he is committed to the methodology of hermeneutics. That is, he acknowledges that understanding takes place within the hermeneutic circle where

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verstandenen Welt überall zu Hause, wir verstehen Sinn und Bedeutung von dem allen, wir selbst sind verwebt in diese Gemeinsamkeiten.<sup>7</sup>

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there are no fixed foundations on which to base our knowledge and understanding. It is clear that for Dilthey the present is the only point of departure for reflections on life since there can be no other starting points, as it were, for understanding than in life itself. To be sure, Dilthey recognises that there are uncertainties in life; however, this does not suggest that the absence of certain foundations implies that there is no truth. Life, as it were, gives rise to truth according to Dilthey. However, on the other hand, Dilthey is unable to emancipate himself from seeking an Archimedian point from which he can build an understanding of historical knowledge. The search for a fixed starting point, for the most part, is due to his fears of relativism. What appears obvious is the fact that Dilthey rejects the idea that historical understanding, similar to self-understanding, is temporally conditioned, thus, abandoning his own insights of experience in regards to history. He understands well that in his life-philosophy understanding is never absolute in the sense that it is finite, but rather that it is always open for amendment. However in respect to history, Dilthey insists on the Cartesian understanding of truth and asserts that historical knowledge is absolute. This is to say that historical knowledge is definite in the sense that it is free from any contextual, situational or temporal restrictions. But then the questions arise, how is history to be understood? From which direction or starting point are we to approach history? Where is the methodology? By divorcing history from experience, Dilthey seems to displace history from life. This is a contrary to his earlier position that history arises from life. It is obvious that Dilthey was in a life-long conflict between the traditional and the hermeneutical. Dilthey's obsession with traditional epistemology did not allow him to give up the concept of objective certainty in regards to history and hindered him therefore from drawing out the logical conclusions for his life-philosophy. This task and the task of legitimising the *Geisteswissenschaften* were thus left open to his successors of the twentieth century, for such a philosopher as Hans-Georg Gadamer. We should note however that traditional hermeneutics did not simply leap to philosophical hermeneutics. There was an important transition between Dilthey's methodological discipline and Gadamer's practical discipline. This transition was Heidegger's 'hermeneutics of facticity'.

### § 2.4 Heidegger's Interpretation of *Dasein*

Following Dilthey's insights into 'life-history', Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) places his attention on the temporal horizons of *Leben* (life) and sets the ontology of

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factical life as the true basis for hermeneutics. In his magnum opus *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*) Heidegger inquires into the nature of 'Being' and poses the age-old question 'what is Being?' Understanding 'Being', Heidegger tells us, is self-understanding, which begins with the uncovering of the entity called '*Dasein*', *there* (*Da*) where *Being* (*Sein*) appears.<sup>90</sup> In simplest terms, *Dasein* is human existence (there) in the world (in-der-Welt). But we should note here that this does not suggest simply locating *Dasein* in a fixed or isolated space as a boat on dry land, but rather as a boat which 'is' only in water, so 'is' *Dasein* – that is, its being – only 'in der Welt'. Being-in-the-world (*Dasein*), Heidegger further adds, has the character of 'thrownness' and can only uncover its 'being' through hermeneutics – through understanding.<sup>91</sup> To illuminate this point, we evidently find ourselves ineluctably 'thrown' into the world, into a time and place we did not choose, yet nevertheless we must accept our being-there (*Dasein*) without knowing neither how or why 'being' (*Sein*) came to be 'there' (*da*) nor where it will lead, other than 'being-towards-death'. This is 'the facticity' of life. In this sense we could say that the happening of life has a genuine 'tragic' character about it since all human beings are thrown, without their doing, into a pre-existent world<sup>92</sup> in which they cannot act other than simply to accept their givenness of being-there-in-the-world. But at the same time, precisely because *Dasein* is thrown into the world, *Dasein* is endowed with creativeness, thoughtfulness and interpretive capacities that are unique to itself. The peculiar condition of thrownness not only confers on *Dasein* special capabilities but also motivates it towards its own self-understanding, the truth of its own being and its possibilities of being. Without the thrownness of *Dasein* would there be a need for interpreting or understanding? As it were, human beings are not placed in the world with a signed-sealed explanation, which offers definitive answers in respect to the meaning of their being-there and how they are 'to be' in the world. *Dasein's* meaning, instead, can only be recognised in terms of its own projecting and projections (*Entwürfe*), i.e. its own possibilities, its potentiality-for-being. To disclose its possibilities, *Dasein* has to understand itself in coming 'to be' what it can be. Understanding (*Verstehen*), Heidegger contends, is a fundamental *existentiale*, and as such it is a basic mode of *Dasein's* 'being' – rather than a faculty of apprehension, as Kant,

<sup>90</sup> The word *Dasein* plays a decisive role in understanding Being. 'Da-sein' literally translated means Being-there. But the usage implies a kind of Being or existence. Although here the concept seems somewhat opaque, in the course of the present investigation, however, its meaning will emerge rather clearly.

<sup>91</sup> Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*. (trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962). (H. 37-8), p. 62.

<sup>92</sup> By 'pre-existent', I am merely suggesting that world is prior to any subject-object separation between self and world.



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for example, had conjectured.<sup>93</sup> Being, in short, is understanding, and therefore the being of *Dasein* already understands – that is, it already has the power to grasp its own ‘potentiality-for-being’. In understanding, *Dasein*’s own possibilities are disclosed in a way that *Dasein* always knows understandingly what it could be. Understanding in this sense is always self-understanding through which *Dasein* cultivates itself:

Dasein is such that in every case it has understood (or alternatively, not understood) that it is to be thus or thus. As such understanding it ‘knows’ what it is capable of – that is, what its potentiality-for-being is capable of. This ‘knowing’ does not first arise from an immanent self-perception, but belongs to the Being of the “there” which is essentially understanding.<sup>94</sup>

Understanding is the ‘knowing’ of *Dasein*’s own ‘situatedness’ in-the-world and the ‘disclosing’ of possibilities. Moreover, if we go a step further and acknowledge that *Dasein*’s capacity to understand, in its movement towards coming ‘to be’ of what itself can be, represents its historicity, understanding, as a structure of being, then, must also be recognised as being oriented to the temporal continuum. Since the being of being-there is historical, so too is understanding historically conditioned. Of the three time dimensions: past, present and future, the futural always has primacy due to the projective character (*Entwurfscharakter*) of understanding. But knowing simply that understanding is a mode of being still seems to be an incomplete understanding of what understanding itself is. What is yet to be explained is the ‘howness’ of understanding. Given that understanding is projection and disclosure, how is projection and disclosedness themselves to be grasped? For this we turn to Heidegger’s reconceptualised theory of phenomenology.<sup>95</sup>

In defining phenomenology, Heidegger goes back to its Greek origins, and explains that this concept is made up of the Greek words: *phainomenon* and *logos*. The first,

<sup>93</sup> Gadamer concurs: ‘Before any differentiation of understanding into the different directions of pragmatic or theoretical interest, understanding is There-being’s mode of being, in that it is potentiality-for-being and “possibility”’ (TM 230 / WM 245).

<sup>94</sup> Heidegger. *Being and Time*. (H. 144), p. 184.

<sup>95</sup> What is meant by a ‘reconceptualised theory of phenomenology’ pertains to Heidegger’s re-thinking and redefining of the concept and theory of phenomenology, first elaborated by Edmund Husserl. Husserl, the founder of ‘transcendental’ phenomenology, argues in his phenomenological account of understanding that the conditions which supply the possibility ‘to understand’ emanate within the ‘lifeworld’ – in the concreteness of living. Moreover, he adds that all objects in the lifeworld are given to the human consciousness. Consequently, all knowledge and understanding are, as it were, situated in the horizon of subjective modes of givenness, in the ‘transcendental ego’, to use his term – this is to say, the existence and meaning of life and the lifeworld are rooted in the history and culture of mankind. Although Heidegger agrees with Husserl’s insights in respect to his notion of the historicity of being, he, on the other hand, breaks away from Husserl’s idea of pure intellect, the transcendental subjectivity, to question the meaning of Being and to dissolve the imaginary position of dominance the subject (human being) has over the object (the world). For an in-depth comparison with Heidegger’s account of ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ in *Sein und Zeit* see Husserl’s *Cartesian meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. (trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague, 1960)

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*phainomenon*, he explains is a Greek expression which traces back to the verb *φαίνεσθαι*, which means ‘to show itself’:

Thus *φαινόμενον* [phenomenon] means that which shows itself, the manifest [das, was sich zeigt, das Sichzeigende, das Offenbare]. *Φαίνεσθαι* itself is a middle-voiced form which comes from *φαίνω* – to bring to the light of day, to put in the light. *Φαίνω* comes from the stem *φα* (pha) –, like *φως* (phôs) the light, that which is bright – in other words, that wherein that the expression “phenomenon” signifies that which shows itself in itself.<sup>96</sup>

Heidegger further clarifies that phenomenon has also a secondary meaning which signifies something that is ‘semblant’ or has ‘semblance’ to something, i.e., something that merely looks like so-and-so, but phenomenon as ‘semblance’, he states, is a mere privative modification which fails to grasp the thing itself. Heidegger likewise expressly differentiates phenomenon from the notion of ‘appearance’, which also fails to indicate something as manifest. Something can *appear* as something else only when there is something that is, in effect, *showing-itself*. Thus, he explicitly argues that we should understand the primordial signification *φαινόμενον* as ‘that which shows itself’, disclosing itself as it is and not something which is ‘seeming’ (*Scheinen*) or ‘appearing’ like something.<sup>97</sup>

As for the –ology in phenomen(ology), Heidegger points out that this suffix has its roots in the concept of logos which signifies ‘discourse’, and discourse, he states, is ‘letting something be seen’, i.e., ‘it lets us see something from the very thing which the discourse is about.’<sup>98</sup> Through the exchange of vocal proclamations, i.e. speaking, we let discourse itself be seen as well as what discourse itself reveals. Together, the concepts *phainomenon* and *logos* create a definition which means ‘to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’<sup>99</sup>. By determining phenomenology as such, Heidegger, ingeniously undermines and reverses the ‘traditional’ relationship between man and the objective world. The idea that objects in the ‘lifeworld’ are constituted by human consciousness and categorisation is replaced with the understanding

<sup>96</sup> *Being and Time*. (II, 28), p. 51.

<sup>97</sup> Heidegger is clearly confronting Kant’s assertion that we can only know the world as it ‘appears’ to us through the constitutive categories of human subjectivity. The world as an object of truth, in Kant’s view, is located in the structure of the consciousness we have of it. Consequently, we cannot get ‘to the things themselves’. Heidegger we shall see works thoroughly against the Kantian notion of appearance in favour of phenomenology to understand the world in itself and as itself.

<sup>98</sup> *Being and Time*. (H, 32), p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, (II, 34), p. 58.

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that the universal or essential qualities of things we encounter in the lifeworld disclose themselves to us as they are in themselves. In this sense, the world in which man lives is no longer his 'private' world. The human consciousness is no longer the centre and origin of all meaning – that is, the prevailing power, which determines and projects a meaning to the external world, is not the human mind; rather it is the ontological self-showing of the thing itself (*Sich-Zeigen der Sache selbst*), i.e. the manifesting of the world as it 'is' in itself, which *Dasein* must interpret.

The consequence of Heidegger's reformulation of phenomenology is a radicalisation of the 'traditional' concept of understanding (*Verstehen*). Understanding is not conceived so much as a capacity that can grasp correctly the relational value of things, which the human consciousness has predetermined, but as a mode of being which phenomenologically discloses and uncovers the being of *Dasein*'s own potentiality-for-being – that is, bringing to the light of day, the being of *Dasein* itself and what itself is capable of being, the 'could be'. Understanding is projection, disclosed phenomenologically. The disclosure of possibilities requires 'letting things be' and in their being, brought to the light of day. This further implies understanding involves 'openedness' (*Offenbarkeit*) to the unfolding of the thing itself. The being of *Dasein* must be open to interpretations and re-interpretations of its own possibilities for being. Life, in other words, can be understood as a process and outcome of continuous interpretation which occurs within the phenomenon of being-in-the-world – a point which Gadamer himself makes clear in his work. By conceptualising and recognising understanding as projection and as disclosedness, Heidegger, likewise, radically reformulates the way the phenomenon of truth is to be perceived and treated.

With the uncovering of the Greek concept of phenomenology, Heidegger concurrently points out that the concept of truth, which the Greeks understood – i.e. 'the most original truth', was misconstrued and transformed by later thinkers, such as St. Thomas Aquinas whose conception of truth was primarily the notion of *adaequatio*. He explains that the traditional philosophical treatment of Truth as *adaequatio* – the 'agreement' of something to something – comes from the interpretation of Aristotle's assertion 'that the soul's "Experiences", its *νοήματα* ('representations'), are likenings of things'.<sup>100</sup> But this interpretation of truth as agreement, Heidegger says, 'is very general

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, (H. 214), p. 257.

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and empty'<sup>101</sup> since it assumes that truth is solely the relation of one thing to another. Truth as *adaequatio*, he argues, does not take into account that not every relation is an agreement, although every agreement (as truth) must be a relation. What is more, the term 'agreement', as a relational understanding of things, does not offer knowledge of something *just as* it is, but only 'just as' something is to another, e.g., 5 is 'just as' 3 plus 2 is – but what are 5, 3, and 2 as things in themselves? To realise the *thing-in-itself*, as it is, is the event of truth, and this process is prior to any agreement or correspondence. Truth, Heidegger claims, is not a relational totality, for it 'has by no means the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in the sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (the Object)'.<sup>102</sup> So then, how is truth as the recognition of the thing-in-itself realisable? To clarify the structure of truth in its 'most original sense', Heidegger recovers the near forgotten Greek 'pre-philosophical' understanding of truth and provides an ontological account of truth which precedes all characterisations of truth as *correspondentia* ('correspondence'), *convenientia* ('coming together') and *adaequatio* ('likening') *intellectus et rei*.

According to Heidegger, truth can be realised through assertion, for 'Asserting is a way of Being towards the Thing itself that is'.<sup>103</sup> With every assertion there is, of course, an idea of what something is, which must be confirmed either as true or false. The act of confirming (*Bewährung*), then, demonstrates an 'uncovering' of what something is 'just as it is':

What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its agreement between "contents of consciousness" among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the Being-uncovered [Entdeckt-sein] of the entity itself – that entity in the "how" of its uncoveredness. This uncoveredness is confirmed when that which is put forward in the assertion (namely the entity itself) shows itself as that very same thing. "Confirmation" signifies the entity showing itself in its selfsameness.<sup>104</sup>

If one puts forward the assertion, 'this is a knife', the object asserted as being a knife must be confirmed. In carrying out a demonstration, the object which one has in mind shows itself just as it is in itself, confirming itself as a knife or not; 'that is to say, it shows that it,

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, (H. 215), p. 258.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, (H. 218), p. 261.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, (H. 218), p. 260.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, (H. 218), p. 261.

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in its selfsameness, is just as it gets pointed out in the assertion as being – just as it gets uncovered as being. . . . The Being-true [truthfulness] (truth) of the assertion must be understood as Being-uncovering [disclosedness].<sup>105</sup> Assertion is, then, an uncovering (*aletheuein*) and pointing out (*apophansis*) of something ‘as it is in itself’. It is a mode of disclosure through which one arrives at a ‘clearedness’. If an assertion is ‘true’, then it uncovers the entity in question. But what if the assertion is false? Is there still an uncovering? To be sure, there is nonetheless an uncovering, but that uncovering is the disclosure of falsehood. The entity does not reveal itself as it is in its selfsameness, but rather as what it is not. There is a kind of ‘negative disclosure’.

As we can see, truth possesses a phenomenological character; it opens and reveals itself ‘as it is in itself’ – something is brought to the light of day and is seen in its ‘uncoveredness’. The understanding of truth as uncovering or unconcealment is the Greeks concept of *alētheia*, which was superseded by the notion of *adaequatio* and in turn by the Cartesian notion of certainty in the seventeenth century. However, simply rediscovering *alētheia* as disclosure is not enough for Heidegger. To complete its understanding, he also adds an important concept which he calls the phenomenon of ‘hiddenness’, and emphasises the struggle that one has to face in penetrating the ‘what is’ behind the concealment. In Heidegger’s view, with every event of unconcealment, there is also an event of closure, a hiddenness. If we look at a sphere, for instance, we never see the whole of the sphere. We are always limited to the frontal view and the backside always eludes us. With an uncovering of one area, there is always a covering-up of some other part of the sphere. Similarly, we do not have a bird’s eye view of what truth is in its fullness. We cannot look down and observe truth as if from a mountaintop; instead, we are limited to an ever-partial view – certain perspectival profiles (*perspektivischen Abschattungen*)<sup>106</sup> of that which is truth. The full scope of truth, as it were, is never entirely revealed, and our knowledge of it therefore remains forever incomplete. What we acquire in our endeavour of finding truth is simply a collection of profiles of truth, which we discover by being-in-the-world. The task of discovering it remains perpetually unfinished. The character of hiddenness and unhiddenness of truth and the imperceptible nature of truth as a whole is vital to Gadamer’s perception of truth:

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological account of truth maintains that things always present a profile of themselves. And this idea of *perspektivischen Abschattungen* is one which both Heidegger and Gadamer adopt into their understanding of truth.

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This, then is his [Heidegger's] point: "Truth" is not complete unconcealment whose ideal fulfillment is the self-presence of absolute spirit. He teaches us rather to think that truth is both revealing and concealing. . . . What is expressed is not everything. The unsaid first brings the said to the word which can reach us. This seems to me compellingly correct. The concepts in which thinking is formulated stand against a wall of darkness.<sup>107</sup>

As we mentioned earlier, understanding is the ongoing process of disclosing and uncovering of *Dasein's* potentiality-for-being, as it 'is', in its *selfsameness*. To this extent, 'Dasein is "in the truth"'.<sup>108</sup> This assertion is possible since Heidegger also defines truth as 'uncoveredness or disclosure of the thing itself. Heidegger fundamentally accords truth with understanding. In fact, every event of truth is understanding, and as such truth is an element of being which solely appertains to and belongs to the being of *Dasein*. It is an issue only for *Dasein*, and can only be discovered by *Dasein*: 'Being (not entities) is something which "there is" only in so far as truth is. And truth is only in so far as and as long as *Dasein* is. Being and truth "are" equiprimordially'.<sup>109</sup> The basic state of being-in-the-world is thus the basis for the primordial phenomenon of truth. Consequently, truth is – as is understanding – conditioned by the historical and social powers of being. Truth reveals to being in being. To be sure, the phenomenon of truth is no longer conceived as something that is independent and ahistorical of being, which can be discovered and understood through methodical research. In fact, it is no longer equated with methodical proof. For Heidegger, truth as *aletheia* is a phenomenological event, which unfolds in the clearing (*Lichtung*) the various facets of itself, so that what we understand is its manifestness. However, the whole truth or truth as a whole can never be grasp since it continuously and simultaneously reveals and hides itself. And because *Dasein* or understanding itself is both historical and finite, there is indeed no arriving at an absolute truth as Hegel had presumed.

<sup>107</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Selbstdarstellung Hans-Georg Gadamer' *Gesammelte Werke*, Band 2 *Hermeneutik II*, 504. The above translation is taken from Robert J. Dostal's essay 'The Experience of Truth for Gadamer and Heidegger: Taking Time in Sudden Lightning' in *Hermeneutics and Truth*, op. cit., 50.

<sup>108</sup> *Being and Time*, (H. 221), p. 263.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, (II, 230), p. 272.

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### § 3. The Humanistic Tradition

Unlike the nineteenth-century modern hermeneuticists or the twentieth-century positivists, the absence of a method specific to the human sciences does not prompt Gadamer to the search for a method proper to the *Geisteswissenschaften*. This is strictly due to the fact that he does not equate truth with methodically reasoned proof. Instead, as a counter-movement against the methodical model of knowledge represented by the 'exact sciences', Gadamer in *Truth and Method* turns immediately to four forsaken humanistic ideals to demonstrate the existence of knowledge and truth, which lie outside the domain of the natural sciences, that can be acquired without the aid of a method.

In contesting the dominion of method – which claims itself as the sole model of scientificity – Gadamer contends that the validity of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is not situated *per se* in 'method' but rather in what he calls the guiding humanistic concepts or principles (*humanistische Leitbegriffe*): *Bildung* (culture), *Sensus communis* (common sense), Judgment (*Urteil*) and Taste (*Geschmack*). He maintains that it is through these concepts that an access to truth, intrinsic to the *Geisteswissenschaften*, is possible. In the following sections we will explore in detail each of the four guiding concepts, which Gadamer illuminates, examining how each is to be valued and applied to the *studia humanitatis*. But first, let us consider some critical questions, which have yet to be posited, that presently need to be addressed if we are to understand properly Gadamer's employment of these concepts. To begin, we may ask, what is Gadamer implying when he states 'as a child of modern Enlightenment, I have been led to my path via the great *humanistic heritage*' or when he speaks of the human sciences as 'the true advocates or representatives of humanism'?<sup>1</sup> How are we to understand 'humanistic heritage'? Is he regarding himself a humanist and suggesting a renewal of the doctrines of humanism? And if so, to which humanistic doctrines or school(s) of thought is he referring? Is he concerned with reviving the humanism that flourished during the Renaissance or is he interested rather in the German humanism of Goethe and Schiller? Or does he go back much further, for example, to Greek metaphysics, to Plato and Aristotle. Jean Grondin, a prominent critic of Gadamer's work, has emphatically declared that Gadamer is an emissary of humanism. In his critical essay 'Gadamer on Humanism', Grondin contends

<sup>1</sup> The first quote is taken from a letter of reply to P. Christopher Smith found in the volume of *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. op., cit., p. 526 (The italic given is my own). Further, the given translation of the original quote 'die wahren Sachwalter des Humanismus' is my own since this particular translation offered in the TM volume (p. 10) seemed rather short of reflecting accurately what is implied in the original.

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that Gadamer defends humanism by following Herder's (humanistic) view 'that humanity constantly has to subdue the animality out of which it stems by developing its rationality, which is actually nothing but the overcoming of animality and the barbaric forms in the history of mankind'.<sup>2</sup> This may well be the case, but oddly enough (or perhaps not so surprisingly) Gadamer never mentions any overcoming or mastering of the darker side of human 'animality' through humanism in either *Truth and Method* or in any of his later writing. There is, to be sure, no tenable evidence to suggest that the fear of barbaric evil or animality is the cause or reason why Gadamer illuminates the concepts: *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgment and taste.

We need to be attentive to the fact that Gadamer never explicitly or implicitly indicates a return to or a 'rehabilitation of humanism'; for one, he is too historical, so to speak; that is to say, he is well aware that a return to 'what was' is impossible. Any attempt to recapture or return to the past, in his part, would be none other than an obvious self-betrayal. Secondly, the section 'Bedeutung der humanistischen Tradition für die Geisteswissenschaften' in *Truth and Method* does not in any manner express or espouse a rehabilitation of *humanism*; rather it translates as 'The Significance of the Humanistic Tradition for the Human Sciences'. What is important, as we shall discover, is Gadamer's use of four 'specific' concepts to show how, combined together, they form a 'mode of being' that establishes and unfolds a valid form of knowledge, which cannot be attained or demonstrated through strict methodological procedure. Yet nonetheless Grondin compares Heidegger's famous *Letter on Humanism*, in which Heidegger replies to Jean Beaufret's questioning of the concept of humanism, with Gadamer's use of the humanistic concepts as the foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften* in *Truth and Method* and argues, '[w]hat is striking in all this, is that Gadamer so candidly brings to life again the classical self-definitions of humanism that Heidegger rejected out of hand'.<sup>3</sup> But is Gadamer's position as antithetical and confrontational to his mentor's as Grondin contends? Does he truly re-employ 'again the classical self-definitions of humanism', and consequently, is it appropriate to label Gadamer a humanist?

When Heidegger in his *Letter* speaks of humanism as the 'forgetfulness of being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*), he is directly in line with his earlier critique of understanding the

<sup>2</sup> Jean Grondin, 'Gadamer on Humanism' in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. op. cit., 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163. Disappointingly, Grondin provides a less than modest summary of the 1946 debate over the concept of humanism between Jean Beaufret and Martin Heidegger. His historical account surrounding the debate and the content



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truth of 'Being' (*Sein und Zeit*), in that both works represent a critique on metaphysical thinking which gives priority to that which 'is' (*Seiendes*) over 'Being' (*Sein*). Through all the excess noise made on Heidegger's rejection of the anthropocentrism of humanism, the core of his critique, contrary to what some critics have argued, does not focus on the evil or brutality of mankind or its self-centredness – albeit, they may be side issues; rather it illustrates how Western thought and language since Plato's metaphysics has forsaken the dignity of Being (*Sein*) in its thoughtless intellectualisation and pursuit of understanding the world (reality) in terms of the 'idea'. Heidegger states:

Freilich beruht die Wesenshoheit des Menschen nicht darin, daß er die Substanz des Seienden als dessen »Subjekt« ist, um als der Machthaber des Seins das Seiendsein des Seienden in der allzulaut gerühmten »Objektivität« zergehen zu lassen. . . . So kommt es denn bei der Bestimmung der Menschlichkeit des Menschen als der Ek-sistenz darauf an, daß nicht der Mensch das Wesentliche ist, sondern das Sein als die Dimension des Ekstatischen der Ek-sistenz. Die Dimension jedoch ist nicht das bekannte Räumliche. Vielmehr west alles Räumliche und aller Zeit-Raum im Dimensionalen, als welches das Sein selbst ist.<sup>4</sup>

But how does metaphysic affect humanism? In Heidegger's view humanism 'thinks metaphysically' and does not place high enough the *humanitas* of man, in that it side-steps and leaves unanswered the questions of Being (*Sein*) by subordinating everything 'that which is' (*Seiendes*) to the instance of the idea, the *eidōs*. Or in simpler terms, it leaps over the questions of *Sein* for the questions of 'Seiendes'.<sup>5</sup> He explains: 'Solange jedoch die Wahrheit des Seins nicht gedacht ist, bleibt alle Ontologie ohne ihr Fundament. Deshalb bezeichnete sich das Denken, das mit »S.u.Z« [Sein und Zeit] in die Wahrheit des Seins vorzudenken versuchte, als Fundamentalontologie.'<sup>6</sup> Gadamer is not in disagreement. In fact, it is precisely this Heideggerian notion of Being and the 'thrownness into Being' over the *Seiendes* that inspired him towards the philosophy of lifeworld. Gadamer concurs that the 'idea' must not have an ontological precedence over 'Being'; for he, like Heidegger, recognises that metaphysics cannot sufficiently render

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of dispute seems far too inadequate for one to be sympathetic to his discontent towards Heidegger's critique on humanism or to grasp and acknowledge the differences between Gadamer and Heidegger's view on humanism.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger. *Über den Humanismus*. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1947), pp. 19, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger makes a clear ontological distinction between 'Being' (*Sein*) and 'that which is' (*Seiendes*). In *Sein und Zeit*, he uses deliberately and cautiously the expression: *il y a l'Être* or 'es gibt das Sein' in order to avoid the expression 'das Sein ist' since the 'ist' notion is normally used for that which 'is', i.e. *das Seiende*. In the English translation it is difficult to express 'es gibt das Sein' (there *is* being) without using the 'ist' part.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger. *Über den Humanismus*. op. cit., 41.

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knowledge of the whole in that: (1) it conceals and subordinates the truth of *Sein* while placing the *Seiendes* to the foreground of being, and (2) it constitutes only a minor facet of the 'whole of Being'. So then, how does Gadamer understand Being? What is it that constitutes the essence of Being? The sum of human thought and experience, he proposes, is language and tradition. He writes:

Rather, language is the universal medium in which understanding itself is realised. The mode of realisation of understanding is interpretation . . . The relation between language and understanding is seen primarily in the fact that it is the nature of tradition to exist in the medium of language, so that the preferred object of interpretation is a linguistic one. . . . Linguistic tradition is tradition in the literal sense of the word, i.e. something handed down. . . . What has come down to us by way of linguistic tradition is not left over, but given to us, told us – whether in the form of direct repetition, of which myth, legend and custom are examples. Or in the form of written tradition . . . (TM 350-51 / WM 366-7).

When we consider his use of the four humanistic concept (*Bildung*, *Sensus communis*, Judgment and Taste), indeed, they reflect a mode of understanding, a way of Being and a way of 'coming into being', which has been preserved through tradition. Consequently, tradition is 'not over against us but something in which we stand and through which we exist'.<sup>7</sup> The humanistic concepts, as presented in *Truth and Method*, are less metaphysical and more involved in bringing into the foreground the whole of Being. Indeed they attempt to go behind or beyond metaphysics. Yet there is a difficulty that arises here. How can Gadamer turn to the 'humanistic' tradition and not imply metaphysics?

As we have explicated thus far, Heidegger in his *Letter* associates humanism with metaphysical thinking, and for this reason, we said, he reproaches the concept since it forsakes the truth of Being. Grondin is perfectly correct when he states, '[f]or Heidegger, it is urgent to realise that man is not at the centre of the universe. He is perhaps a peripheral apparition in the whole of Being, out of which it should gain a new understanding of itself and its essential finitude, or "throwness" into Being and by Being.'<sup>8</sup> Gadamer, I added, likewise turns away from metaphysics, but does this imply that he also rejects humanism? Since Gadamer is not very explicit in his position concerning this concept, we can only speculate. Of course he uses the adjective 'humanistic', which,

<sup>7</sup> Richard F. Palmer. *Hermeneutics*. (Northwestern University Press, Evanston. 1969), p. 177.

<sup>8</sup> Grondin. 'Gadamer on Humanism', op. cit., 160.

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linguistically speaking, implies having to do with or concerning 'humanism', but in what manner does he apply this concept? In some sense he seems to keep with the traditional use of the term as that which attributes crucial importance to education, i.e. cultivation in the broadest sense. One has only to consider the first humanistic concept, *Bildung*, which he illuminates comprehensively, to understand that Being is and demands openness, revision, and correction. What is more, the concepts: *sensus communis*, judgment and taste all constitute and support Gadamer's notion of *Bildung*. Yet there seems to be something more in his use of the term 'humanistic', a latent or perhaps even an outward significance, which has yet to be considered. Without being too presumptuous, I propose that there is a subtle re-determining or redefining of the concept by Gadamer, occasioned by a 'Heideggerian prejudice', that is, the influence of *Sein und Zeit* and the *Letter on Humanism*. When Gadamer utilises the term 'humanistic', there seems to be a new interpretation; that is to say, he clears away some of the presuppositions which over time have hidden its original meaning. His accordance with Heidegger's critique on metaphysics seems to suggest that he, in effect, has 'polished' the term 'humanistic' enough to overcome the priority of 'methodical abstraction from nature or from the concrete whole', i.e. the metaphysical subjectivism or the forgetfulness of being. What seems to have taken place is the redefining of the term 'humanistic' by incorporating the traditional notion of education with the Heideggerian emphasis on Being to formulate a concept that focuses on the meaning of Being, which subsequently influences our understanding of the *Seiendes*. Again, if we look at the four particular concepts which he brings to light, they all centre on the *Sein* rather than on the *Seiendes*. In fact, with each concept, Gadamer filters through all of its transformations to penetrate beneath the diluted and multi-coloured surface of the word, placing himself at the centre of what is thought and unthought, to rediscover or 'uncover' its original understanding. To be sure he tries to bring about a 'new event of disclosure', a new way of thinking and understanding each of the four guiding principles. And in this way, the rediscovery of humanistic concepts seems to follow the Heideggerian phenomenological notion of truth uncovering, unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*). Hence, to say that Gadamer is antithetic to Heidegger's position on humanism seems somewhat misconstrues.

In a way, it seems more appropriate and precise to say that Gadamer possesses something of a 'new' or 'polished' humanistic perspective, i.e. a general standpoint from which he views the truth of Being (*Sein*) and that which is (*Seiendes*). This perspective,

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we may argue, is neither a self-inflating affirmation of human greatness nor the perfectibility of man; it reflects rather a cautionary vision which tries to understand the meaning of Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*), to borrow Heidegger's expression, by recognising the enormous value that concepts, such as *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgment and taste, as a mode of being, add to the sphere of knowledge and to understanding the nature of Being. What is also important to note is that the 'Gadamerian notion of humanism' arguably offers an alternative way of discovering truth and consequently a new way of looking at the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

### § 3.1 *Bildung*

After introducing a very brief account on the problematic nature of method, Gadamer's discourse turns immediately to the concept of *Bildung* and briefly outlines its origin and its transformation in meaning. The early idea of *Bildung*, i.e. natural shape which refers to the external appearance of the well-formed limbs and figures, according to Gadamer, underwent a semantic shift by losing its original meaning and became associated with the notion of culture (*Kultur*). From there on, the notion of *Bildung* came to describe the peculiar human mode of cultivating one's natural talents and capacities. However the understanding of *Bildung* made one of its most profound transformations when Wilhelm von Humboldt recognised and established a differentiation between the meaning of *Bildung* and culture. Humboldt saw that by the idea of *Bildung* 'we mean something both higher and more inward, namely the attitude of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavour, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character' (TM 11 / WM 8). Thus, in reacquainting us to the humanistic tradition, Gadamer takes Humboldt's significant insight – that is, characterising *Bildung* not so much as an idea intimately connected to the notion of culture – as his starting point. He explains:

*Bildung* has no goals outside itself. . . . the concept of *Bildung* transcends that of the mere cultivation of given talents, from which concept it is derived. The cultivation of a talent is the development of something that is already given, so that the practice and cultivation of it is a mere means to an end (12/9).<sup>9</sup>

Gadamer further develops the understanding of *Bildung* by following Hegel who first scrutinised thoroughly what *Bildung* is. From Hegel's standpoint, man suffers alienation

<sup>9</sup> Compare with Joel Weinsheimer who explains, '*Bildung* is distinct from cultivation in that it is more the acquisition of potencies than the development of latencies'. Weinsheimer GH. op. cit., 69.

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from the immediate and the natural, existing in a state of exile. This separation is the result of man's rational and intellectual nature; however, at the same time it is only the rational and intellectual side of man which provides the possibility for a reunion with his proper state of being. *Bildung*, according to Hegel, is the mode by which man can overcome his alienated being. The formal nature of *Bildung* is characterised by the virtue of openness and involves a movement away:

from the immediacy of desire, of personal need and private interest and the unreasonable demand of universal. . . . It consists in learning to allow what is different from oneself and to find universal viewpoints from which one can grasp the thing, 'the objective thing in its freedom', without selfish interest. (14 / 10-11).

However we must keep in mind that that attitude of openness is also a prerequisite of *Bildung* itself. The *gebildet* man, i.e. the 'cultivated individual', is characterised by his selflessness, that is, his ability to abstract himself away from his own immediate particularity, to gaze towards something other and universal. He is not like the workhorse, which simply possesses a tunnel vision due to its blinders. Through *Bildung* the individual liberates himself from his blinders, and to this extent the vision of the *gebildet* individual holds a greater radius of sight, enabling him to look far beyond the provincial confines of his 'self', of his own community and culture. *Bildung* is thus the mode of self-formation through the movement from alienation to the rediscovery of home. 'To seek one's own in the alien, to become at home in it', Gadamer, following Hegel, writes, 'is the basic movement of spirit, whose being is only return to itself from what is other' (15 / 11). Here we can recognise at once the likeness between the circular movement of *Bildung* and the hermeneutic circle of whole and part. Joel Weinsheimer similarly notes, 'In the structure of excursion and reunion defining *Bildung* we see at once the circular structure of hermeneutic understanding . . . .'<sup>10</sup> In the subsequent chapters I will elaborate further this parallel between *Bildung* and understanding; however, for the present section it is enough to point out that the concept of *Bildung* ties closely to the phenomenon of understanding.

On this point Gadamer concurs with Hegel's conception of *Bildung*. But how does one arrive at *Bildung*? If *Bildung* promotes openness and openness is itself a necessary condition for the acquisition of *Bildung*, then the question remains: from where does the initial receptivity spring forth? Gadamer's account of *Bildung* does not appear to

<sup>10</sup> Joel Weinsheimer. *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 72.

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pronounce directly the origins of *Bildung*; however, we may conjecture that Gadamer indirectly supplies *Bildung* with an ontological foundation when he writes, 'every single individual that raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs and institutions of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own' (TM 15 / WM 11). From the very moment of our existence, we are, as it were, always immersed in the process of *Bildung*.<sup>11</sup> Thus our 'being' is not defined as a fixed substance or essence, but rather alters and develops through *Bildung*.

Eventually, Gadamer departs from Hegel by disconnecting *Bildung* from Hegel's philosophy of absolute spirit. Whereas Hegel envisions the spirit ultimately completing the movement from alienation to finding a home, Gadamer, on the other hand, does not see an 'end point where the movement of alienation and return can cease in the total self-appropriation'.<sup>12</sup> He does not deny the idea of perfect *Bildung* that is always open for greater growth and progression. His dissension from Hegel lies in the fact that Hegel assumes one can arrive at perfect *Bildung* in the absolute sense. For Gadamer such is not the case. Although the movement of the spirit toward homecoming becomes nearer and nearer, there is never a complete arrival; rather it is perpetual act with indefinite progress and what is gained in each and every instance of movement is never lost but is ever 'preserved'. Hence '*Bildung*', claims Gadamer, 'is a genuine historical idea, and because of this historical character of "preservation" is important for understanding in the human sciences' (TM 12 / WM 9). To be sure it is through *Bildung*'s openness and the continuous movement and subsequent preservation of knowledge acquired through *Bildung* that 'the human sciences presuppose that the scientific consciousness is already formed and for that very reason possesses the right, unlearnable and inimitable tact that bears the judgment and the mode of knowledge of the human sciences' (15 / 12).

To elucidate how the presupposed historical consciousness operates in the human sciences, Gadamer appeals to Helmholtz's concept of 'tact' and explains its correlation to *Bildung*. For Helmholtz, tact represents an alternative to scientific *tabula rasa*, and exists as a form of social sense and practical know-how. To possess tact implies that we possess 'a particular sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations, and [know] how to behave in them, for which we cannot find any knowledge from general principles. Hence an essential part

<sup>11</sup> The established ontological foundation for *Bildung* is the same basic structure for understanding as Gadamer conceives it. This will become more apparent in the progress of this thesis, especially when we begin to consider Heidegger's account of *being-in-the-world* and the phenomenon of understanding.

<sup>12</sup> Weinsheimer GH. op. cit., 71.

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of tact is inexplicitness and inexpressibility' (16 / 13). In other words, tact reflects the capacity to distinguish what is appropriate from what is inappropriate. Being tactful requires that one knows what is proper to say and leaves unsaid what is improper. The recognition of inappropriateness 'helps one to preserve distance, it avoids the offensive, the intrusive, the violation of the intimate sphere of the person' (17 / *ibid.*). Like *Bildung*, tact involves a sense of openness to the universal, i.e. receptiveness for 'otherness'. However, we must keep in mind that the universal here does not represent a determined concept or a pre-given set of norms or rules. Tact does not involve a mechanistic application to a particular situation, for there is no 'user's manual'; rather it resembles an intuitive sense which functions accordingly to each new and particular social circumstance. It renders a kind of immediate knowledge which cannot be derived from or reduced to a method, for there are no general principles involved that could determine the explanations for its conclusions. Moreover, tact is not limited to social customs and manners, but is also effective in the *Geisteswissenschaften*. According to Helmholtz, Gadamer writes, 'tact which functions in the human sciences is not simply a feeling and unconscious, but is at the same time a mode of knowing and a mode of being' (*ibid.* / 14). Thus tact presupposes both aesthetic and historical *Bildung*. To have tact functioning in the human sciences implies that one possesses a sense of the aesthetic or the historical. However since, as Gadamer points out, both aesthetic and historical sense involve more than an intuitive or artistic feelings, and are not innate to one's natural constitution; consequently, we speak in terms of aesthetic or historical consciousness – rather than of sense – which must be formed through *Bildung*. Nevertheless this consciousness, explains Gadamer, functions with the similar characteristic notion of immediacy commonly ascribed to the senses, i.e., it is able to determine differences and constitute evaluations for each particular instance although it is unable to offer its reasons. Thus, in relation to the human sciences tact is understood in terms of historical or aesthetic consciousness. Any individual who possesses aesthetic consciousness is able to discriminate 'between beautiful and ugly, good or bad qualities, and whoever has a sense of the historical [that is, historical consciousness] knows what is possible for an age and what not, and has a sense of the difference of the past in relation to the present' (17 / *ibid.*).

In retrospect, *Bildung* prepares the sensitivity and receptiveness to what is 'other' – known otherwise as tact. It is a cultivated mindset which involves an openness to different and more universal points of view, and to this extent *Bildung*, following Hegel, allows one

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to lose oneself insofar as one is capable of distancing oneself from one's self-centredness to gain viewpoints which extends far beyond the ordinary horizon. The 'cultivated' (*gebildet*) consciousness moves within *Bildung's* openness, keeping himself receptive to other potential perspectives. His standpoints are by no means determined; they do not represent fixed attitudes but manifest themselves as a way of knowing, i.e. being ever open to possibilities. *Bildung* therefore reflects how one comes into being. It does not reveal itself as a set procedure or an attitude which one can simply reduce and codify into a concept of method. Through it one discovers the capacity for recognising forms of knowledge which are not founded on fixed rules or laws. It directs or shows to one 'ways of coping', that is, an understanding and an awareness of life and of self, by preserving what is learned and building through what it has gained. Thus Gadamer concludes, 'What make the human sciences into sciences can be understood more easily from the tradition of the concept of *Bildung* than from the concept of method in modern science' (18 / 15).

### § 3.2 *Sensus communis*

In the closing analysis of *Bildung*, Gadamer explains, via tact, that *Bildung* is a 'universal sense'. This conclusion eventually leads to the second element of the humanistic tradition, namely the concept of *sensus communis*, common sense. Surprisingly, neither of the two major scholastic contributions concerning Gadamer's hermeneutics, i.e. Joel Weinsheimer's *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* and Georgia Warnke's *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason*, seem recognise the seminal aspect concerning the idea of *sensus communis*. Whereas Weinsheimer's reading provides a brief commentary on Gadamer's elucidation and understanding of common sense, Warnke simply foregoes the topic altogether. What is more, even the most recent studies supporting Gadamer's philosophical project fail to highlight the weight of the second of the four guiding humanistic concepts.<sup>13</sup> This obvious neglect however seems contradicting and misleading, given the fundamental importance that Gadamer gives to *sensus communis*. As he contends:

<sup>13</sup> In the course of my research it has become apparent to me how little and limited the critical treatment given to *sensus communis* is. I have found that most critics either skip over or provide only a superficial commentary or two to what is obviously a determining aspect of Gadamer's philosophical endeavour. Thankfully, I am not alone in singling out the importance of *sensus communis* and have had the fortune of reading Donald Phillip Verene's essay 'Gadamer and Vico on *Sensus communis*' in *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, op. cit., 137-153. Although I am inclined to disagree with much of Verene's narrow reading and argument concerning Gadamer's concept of reflection, his perspective on Vico's *sensus communis* has, nonetheless, helped me to understand Gadamer's position regarding common sense more



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There is something immediately obvious about grounding literary and historical studies and the methods of the human sciences in this idea of the *sensus communis*.

For their object, the moral and historical existence of man, as they take shape in his activities, is itself largely determined by the *sensus communis*<sup>7</sup> (TM 22-3 / WM 20).

Therefore in the following section we shall undertake a more intensive and comprehensive approach to investigate how Gadamer defines *sensus communis*, and how he relates this concept to the human sciences.

Interestingly enough, Gadamer's account of common sense closely follows Giovanni Battista (Giambattista) Vico's (1668-1744) conception of the *sensus communis* found in *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (*On the Study Methods of Our Time*), first published in 1709. Gadamer states that there are two key elements which dictate Vico's understanding of *sensus communis*. The first of these, he points out, concerns the humanistic ideal of *eloquentia*, rhetoric, which he says has always possessed a twofold interpretation. "Talking well" (*eu legein*), Gadamer states, 'is not merely a rhetorical ideal. It also means saying the right thing, i.e. the truth, and is not just the art of speaking – of saying whatsoever well' (19 / 16).<sup>14</sup> It goes without saying that one does not generally enter into a discourse without a sense of conviction, certitude. For a conversation to occur, whether there is general agreement or discord, one or both parties must claim something to be presumably right, to be probably true; furthermore, it demands an engagement and a willingness to understand and adjust to the possibilities of what is stated and what is asked. Without such attentiveness for the possible or the probable, conversation would be otherwise purely nonsensical. We should note the importance here regarding the sense of the 'probable' in that it is virtually an axiom of rhetoric. For Vico the development of the *sensus communis* is 'not nourished on the true, but on the probable', states Gadamer (21 / 18). The implication is that through rhetoric and the presuppositions of discourse, which assume a probable truth claim, we can determine a general sense of that which is 'obvious' (*verisimile*), i.e. a common sense of what is true and what is right discovered from or against the probable truth and the probable right. In connection to historical studies the notion of probability is essential. Gadamer adduces D'Alembert who states:

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clearly. See also Dieter Teichert's *Erfahrung, Erinnerung Erkenntnis*. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991), pp. 3-7.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed Gadamer's reading of Vico's definition of rhetoric is precise when we compare it with the *Institutiones Oratoriae*, in which Vico connects rhetoric with Philosophy and explains 'Philosophy . . . informs the mind of man with truth, and the spirit with virtues, and also teaches one to think, to do, and to speak that which is true and honest'. The italics given are my own. *The Art of Rhetoric*. (trans. Giorgio A. Pinton and Arthur W. Shippee. Amsterdam, 1996), p. 3.

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Probability operates principally in the case of historical facts, and in general for all past, present and future events, which we attribute to a kind of chance because we do not unravel the causes. That part of this knowledge whose object is the present and the past, although it may be founded on testimony alone, often produces in us a conviction that is as strong as that which gives birth to axioms (23 / 20).

Arguably, Gadamer is in full agreement here, for he understands well that historical studies and the human sciences in general are not determined by absolutes but by the probable. For example, although we may know particular facts regarding the history of the Cold War, our knowledge of its precise beginnings, the exact causes of the event and its total effects can never be determined simply by facts. Given factual information, a historian, first, must be able to 'interpret' them and then situate those facts in a particular way so that the information becomes understandable. Historical studies do not merely attempt to list facts chronologically (though this is one part in the study of history); the primary intention of the historian is to connect the events that have occurred interpretively and meaningfully into a comprehensive whole. Moreover, one has to take into account that oftentimes, if not always, there is a lack of factual evidences to account for a 'historical happening(s)', and so the historian must fill in the gaps that arise according to his knowledge. Add to this, historical studies almost always involve two or more competing perspectives and misinterpretations. Every interpretation thus implies a probability. For historical understanding, or for that matter scientific understanding, to be genuine, they must begin with a sense of openness to the probable.

The second element of prominence in terms of *sensus communis* involves the Aristotelian distinction between the practical ideal of *φρόνησις* (*phronēsis*) and the theoretical ideal of *σοφία* (*sophia*). As opposed to purely theoretical and abstract knowledge, *sophia*, *phronēsis* represents a kind of practical knowledge/wisdom that is applicable to concrete situations. According to Aristotle, it is the governing knowledge that guides daily living, in that it implies a capacity to grasp, to know the particular 'circumstances' in which one is situated, determining 'instinctively' the principle actions that one is to carry out in moments of decision. Subsequently, it denotes an 'intellectual virtue' since '[t]he grasp and moral control of the concrete situation requires this subsumption of what is given under the universal, i.e. the goal that one is pursuing so that the right thing may result. Hence it assumes a direction of the will, i.e. moral being (*hexis*)' (21-22 / 19). This means, in addition to the notion of capacity (*dunamis*), *phronēsis*

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also presupposes a moral attitude and knowledge of conduct, which constantly develops. To this extent the Greek concept of *phronēsis* constitutes an important element in the Roman idea of *sensus communis*.<sup>15</sup> For Vico the ethical connotation and practical capacity of *phronēsis*, to differentiate what is proper from what is improper, are attributes apropos to *sensus communis* in that they signify a general understanding for the right and the good, and in turn demonstrate a movement towards a 'moral being'.<sup>16</sup> This combination of practical and moral 'sensitivity', as Vico conceives it, is a form of knowledge which cannot be derived from general principles of cognition in that it lies outside the rational concept of knowledge; it is rather an 'inner' sense acquired through tradition and social intercourse – i.e., knowledge learned not in the abstract sense but by living in the concrete community which dictates its structures and aims. Concurrently, *sensus communis* is also that which forms and establishes communities. For these reasons it is a 'communal sense'. As understood, the Roman idea of *sensus communis* is contrary to the Greek concept of common sense (*koine dunamis*)<sup>17</sup> which Aristotle speaks of in his *De Anima*. Gadamer points out that Aristotle's notion of *sensus communis* infers a general intellectual faculty (belonging to all men) that combines the total realm of perception which constitute judgment (TM 22 / WM 19.). This suggests that common sense is the immanent point of unity and convergence of all the outer senses through which we apprehend the physical world. In opposition to this Greek view, Vico, Gadamer explains, rather opts for and holds fast to the Roman version of common sense which: 'when faced with Greek cultivation, held firmly to the value and significance of their own traditions of public and social life' (ibid.). As indicated above, *sensus communis*, as a Roman idea, is a form of concrete, pragmatic knowledge and a sense of moral being acquired through tradition and participation in the living community. To possess it means that one owns the sensitivity to grasp the multitude of circumstances that pervade life, i.e., one is able to determine what one should or ought to do and what one should not do in all the divers concrete situations

<sup>15</sup> Compare with Günter Figal, 'Phronesis As Understanding: Situating Philosophical Hermeneutics' in *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue, and Phronēsis in Philosophical Hermeneutics*, (ed. Lawrence K. Schmidt, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 236-247., which provides an extensive and thoughtful insight into Gadamer's understanding of *phronēsis*. See also James Risser's latest critical work, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 2., in which he contends, 'With the publication of *Reason and in the Age of Science* (1974), a compilation of essays resulting, in part, from Gadamer's confrontation with Habermas and the problem of social reason [common sense], one could argue that the Greek notion of *φρόνησις* is really the key to the entire project'.

<sup>16</sup> Here we can see a similarity between *phronēsis* and the above mentioned tact. Both concepts imply sensitiveness to situations, having the sense to know how to behave.

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of life, and choose what is proper, the common good and the common right. For Vico it is this sense of self-consciousness and sense for community which gives the human will its direction and 'not the abstract generality of reason, but the concrete generality that represents the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race. Hence the development of this sense of community is of prime importance of living' (21 / 18).

What is more, the Roman idea of common sense, like *Bildung*, represents a genuine historical idea. The social constitution of its essence, for instance, clearly suggests that it is historical, for man is a historical being (Dilthey). A second element, which constitutes its historical character, is the sense of preservation it carries. In addition to participation in society, *sensus communis*, we recall, is acquired through tradition. Part of its basic foundation is the tradition on which it stands and the tradition which it 'preserves', and in this sense it is a historically 'gebildet sense'. A further comparison with *Bildung* reveals that there is in *sensus communis*, as in *Bildung*, a sense of openness which furthers its development. However there is a subtle contrast between openness in *Bildung* and openness in *sensus communis*. Whereas the former is defined by a receptiveness to what is other or a willingness to change, the latter in contrast indicates a sense of 'leaving the door open' for possible or even probable changes inasmuch as it is constituted on the historical and social circumstances of the community. What this means is that common sense is conditioned by time and place, and as such it is always relative to a particular community, changing and adapting to new situations. In Gadamerian sense, it is certitude, which is susceptible to adjustments, i.e., it is not absolute. There is a critical implication of relativism involved here concerning 'practical knowledge'. Yet nonetheless, Gadamer contends that truth is intrinsic to common sense and as a result bases *sensus communis* as a foundation for the human sciences. Gadamer's understanding of truth seems obviously to go sharply against the Cartesian notion of certainty. This apparent contradiction, we will examine more thoroughly herein after; however, at this point it appears sufficient to say that *sensus communis* is a form of moral and social knowledge, governed by the probable and not by some reasoned proof, a universal rule. For a society to form and sustain itself or for an individual to grasp his society, whether it is local or national or the human community in general, there must exist, as it were, a form of sensible knowledge which the Romans understood as *sensus communis*.

<sup>17</sup> The Greek concept of *koine aisthesis* (common sense in terms of common feelings, i.e. sensory perceptions), we should point out, is also antithetical to Vico's understanding of *sensus communis*. For Vico neither *koine dynamis* nor *koine*

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Given the importance of the Renaissance scholar's interpretation of common sense, it would appear that Vico and the Italian rhetorical tradition in general enjoyed a substantial impact on the eighteenth century. However this, of course, was not the case, as Gadamer explains, '[o]ne can discern hardly any influence of Vico on the eighteenth century' (TM 24 / WM 21). Instead the dominant influence on Western thought came from Vico's British counterpart, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), whose philosophical works also refer to the Roman idea of *sensus communis*. In order to demonstrate the significance of wit and humour, Shaftesbury 'explicitly cites the Roman classics and their humanist interpreters' (ibid.), claiming that *sensus communis* is a form of 'public spirit' consisting of an intellectual and social virtue which emanates more often from matters of passion than from reason. Most importantly, it is a spirit that one acquires through sympathy and fellowship with members of one's own community.<sup>18</sup> Comparatively, the practice of wit and the understanding of humour, to be effective, demands a similar form of intellectual and civic solidarity, a sense of common ground or collective spirit, which Shaftesbury argues comes by way of social interaction and sympathetic partnership between persons within a given community. Jokes or parodies, for example, are rarely universal, in that they are contextual, often reflecting a particular society. Generally speaking, one has to stand within the basic framework of a society, i.e. its religious, social and political culture, to grasp a given joke. The comprehension of political jokes, for instance, is always closely bound to the political context in which they occur. This becomes clear when we consider how political jokes were understood in the former divided state of Germany. Although both East and West Germans shared a common language, citizens of West Germany often could not share the same humour in political satires or parodies as their eastern counterparts when the jokes contained specific terms or ideas unique to the East. No doubt each community possessed its own set of common political assumptions, conventions and purposes, and for this reason one must possess a contextual understanding if political jokes or jokes in general are to be effective, i.e. humorous or witty. To this extent we can see why it is important to have a sense of community, a bond of sympathy, to understand humour and to exercise wit. Obviously, the cornerstone of Shaftesbury's social philosophy is founded on the Roman idea of *sensus communis*, for it denotes a common source of thought and will that brings together

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*aisthesis* is pertinent to the Roman conception of *sensus communis*.

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individuals, and represents a form of knowledge that keeps individuals from the dark of things, to understand a joke, for instance. Shaftesbury's profound thoughts, we said earlier, had a broad impression on the eighteenth century. In Great Britain his work was succeeded by the Scottish empiricists Francis Hutcheson (1694-1747) and David Hume (1711-1776), both of whom, in constituting a doctrine of moral sense, came to set the communal feelings of sympathy, i.e. common sense, as the structural foundation of their moral philosophy. Both empiricists argued that the operation of sympathy was the guiding force of all human affairs. Likewise in France, the tradition of *le bon sens*, good sense, can also be traced back to Vico and Shaftesbury's idea of social virtue. As the French still understand it today, *Le bon sens*, explains Gadamer, is knowledge that governs our relations to others and forges communal bonds; it represents the employment of sound judgment and a way of acting that is proper to a given society.

However, despite the obvious importance of the moral and socio-political elements contained in the concept of *sensus communis*, in Germany the followers of Shaftesbury and the Scottish empiricists, even during the German enlightenment, failed to take up the particular social dimensions that constitute the significance of the Roman idea. Following the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition instead, '[s]*sensus communis* was understood as a purely theoretical faculty, theoretical judgment, on a level with moral consciousness (conscience) and taste' (IM 26 / WM 24). But this, of course, was contrary to the other leading countries of the Enlightenment, such as Great Britain and France where the moral and social characteristics of *sensus communis* were being preserved as a civic quality. However, as Gadamer explains, Germany was not completely disconnected from the Roman notion of inner sensibility. He states that while the German philosophical community on the whole turned to the Greeks for their notion of common sense, a Swabian vicar by the name of Friedrich-Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) appealed to Shaftesbury's *sensus communis*, with all its wealth of moral and social implications, to challenge the delimitation of truth and knowledge by Cartesian rationalism. In his critical writing, *Inquisitio in sensum commune[m] et rationem*, written in 1753, Oetinger argues that the methods of mathematics and reason alone cannot exhaust the sphere of knowledge since they are, in his view, limited to a particular domain of human understanding. Although he acknowledges that establishing and advancing theories through deductive reasoning is one

<sup>18</sup> Shaftesbury, '*Sensus communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor*', treatise 2 of *Characteristics of men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. (ed. John M. Robertson. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p. 72.

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way of ascertaining and guaranteeing universal truths, he also maintains that the mere exactness of calculation and the logical consequence of deduction is not necessarily the only way of discovering and knowing the certitudes that govern human life. Oetinger's rejection of rational scientific method, as being the only sources of knowledge, is one clear evidence why Gadamer invokes this obscure and little known Pietist. To be sure the concept of knowledge and truth is far richer and more substantial for the Swabian theologian than how it is understood under Cartesian rationalism, in that it extends beyond the mere clarity of concepts and consists of 'certain anticipations and predilections' (27 / 25). According to Oetinger, the source of 'common truths that are useful to all men at all times and places, "sensible" truths, as opposed to rational truths'(28 / 26) comes from the *sensus communis*. He represents with his appeal to *sensus communis* not so much an epistemological position but rather a wealth of substantial truths, which are determined by content. He, like Shaftesbury, saw common sense as a form of practical wisdom of life, which derives more from the pureness of 'heart' than from the reasoning head. According to Gadamer, Oetinger saw a common divine light in all life, which, he argued, forges the living community. In man this spiritual essence operates in the form of 'instinct' and 'inner stimulation', i.e. primordial tendencies (*radicatae tendentiae*), that possess 'dictatorial, divine, irresistible force', to guide man towards the greatest truth and human happiness, a unity with God. Instincts and inner stimulation however should not be understood simply as *confusae repraesentationes* (Leibniz) nor as cursory effects, which overcome the *ratio* from time to time, for they are, according to Oetinger, permanent fixtures of our being – i.e., they are always present but only come to life when they are needed – and represent traces of the divine 'residua simulacra imaginis Divinae in anima' in the human soul. Although it may be somewhat speculative, it nevertheless appears as if Shaftesbury's notion of 'natural affections' is involved here in Oetinger's philosophy of life. The natural (instinctive) human sentiments seem to be the basis not only of Shaftesbury's philosophical thoughts but also of Oetinger's theological convictions. However, contrary to this view, Gadamer points out that Oetinger, in fact, accepts and appropriates the Aristotelian notion of common *dynamis* to his understanding of common sense. But if *sensus communis* is simply: 'viva et penetrans perceptio objectorum toti humanitati obviatorum, ex immediato tactu et intuitu eorum, quae sunt simplicissima. . .', (27 / 25)<sup>19</sup> then this seems to contradict Shaftesbury's account of common sensibility, which

<sup>19</sup> My translation. 'the vivid and penetrating perception of objects obvious to all human beings, from their immediate

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requires self-awareness and a sympathetic bond between individual of a given community. Unfortunately, Gadamer is neither very clear nor ever thorough in explicating the relationship between Oetinger and Shaftesbury. He mainly explains that the two are alike in their rejection of the one-sidedness of rational method and their shared understanding of common sense as a form of moral and practical knowledge as shown in Solomon's proverbs. This however does not seem to adequately demonstrate how Oetinger is able to bring his ideas into harmony with those of Shaftesbury, as Gadamer maintains?

Clearly, it would be difficult to argue, according to Gadamer's account, that Oetinger takes Shaftesbury's notion of common sense word for word, in that we can see an obvious discrepancy in Gadamer's condensed analysis of the theologian's enterprise. But given the blurred connection between the two philosophic minds, there is nevertheless a sufficient motive to support why Gadamer incorporates this relative unknown figure within the context of his elucidation of *sensus communis*. Oetinger's insistence on the practicality of common sense seems to be the precise theme on which we should focus our attention. When we take into account Gadamer's own insistence on calling his philosophy, 'practical philosophy', and his inexhaustible emphasis on the Aristotelian concept of *phronēsis*, an openness to Oetinger's 'practical sensibility' is not inconceivable.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, there are instances of hermeneutical significance which emanate from Oetinger's work. Gadamer quotes: 'the ideas that can be found in scripture and in the works of God are the more fruitful and purified the more that each can be seen in the whole and all can be seen in each' (TM 28-9 / WM 26). This is of course an example of the hermeneutic circle of whole and part where understanding warrants the comprehension of the parts in terms of the whole and vice versa. This seems impressive in light of the fact that he pre-dates Schleiermacher who is largely regarded as the forefather of hermeneutics. And what is more, in the advent of growing German idealism, the pietistic thinker was insightful enough to defend the concept of truth and knowledge that comes from our common ('inner') sense, against both empirical science and transcendental philosophy, by employing the idea of *sensus communis*. The common divine spirit which manifests itself as instinct and the practical application of that inner sense within the context of *vita* (life), according to Oetinger, is a gift (belonging to all) from the heavens, which springs forth, in

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*contact and intuition* [my italics], which are simple'

<sup>20</sup> "'Practical philosophy" is much more than a mere methodological model for the "hermeneutical" disciplines. It also offers something like a sachliche Grundlage – substantive foundation – for them.' 'Reflection on My Philosophical Journey', op. cit., 31.



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necessary moments, from the depths of the human soul. Although Oetinger's interests were more with the spiritualistic facets of *sensus communis* than with the political or the social, nevertheless, we can still see that he keeps the relationship between common sense and society intact and further defines it, albeit implicitly, as a sense which comes from 'Being'. But as Gadamer states:

the supplanting of pietistic tendencies in the later eighteenth century caused the hermeneutic function of *sensus communis* to decline to a mere corrective: that which contradicts the consensus of feelings, judgments and conclusions, i.e. the *sensus communis* cannot be correct (29 / 27).

To be sure the German Enlightenment, with its intense intellectualising, overshadowed and removed all of the moral, political and social elements contained in *sensus communis*, reducing it to a mere judgment of taste (Kant). If we recall, in chapter one we discovered that Kant established a universal validity for judgments of taste by providing an a priori principle of 'subjective' finality. Judgments of taste, he explained, were universal since the free harmonious inter-play between the faculties of imagination and understanding, which provokes an inner feeling of pleasure, is common to all man. It is in this sense that Kant labelled taste as a common sense and reduced *sensus communis* to mere judgment of taste, stripped of its moral and political significance.

### § 3. 3 Judgment And Taste: The Loss of Their Epistemological Significance

With respect to judgment (*Urteil*) and taste (*Geschmack*), the final two humanistic concepts, what concerns Gadamer most is how the philosophy of German enlightenment altered these two concepts so that their epistemological significance as an 'intellectual virtue' become lost. Furthermore, the elucidation of both concepts anticipates Gadamer's next major section which examines in-depth both Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, with Kant both judgment and taste reached their climactic transformation. By re-conceptualising of judgment and taste, Kant not only removed all of the values that originated with each concept, but also artificially narrowed the idea of *sensus communis* to the judgment of taste and confined taste to the aesthetics.

Because Gadamer is primarily concerned with revealing the correlation between *sensus communis* and judgment and their 'disconnection' as a result of Kantian transcendental doctrine of judgment, he therefore begins first with the concept of judgment before elucidating the concept of taste. However I, on the other hand, will proceed from

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the opposite direction, that is, I will examine first taste and afterwards move on to judgment. There are two principal reasons for this reversal. First, the objective here is to trace the development and relationship between judgment and taste and not *sensus communis* and judgment, and thus in doing so it seems only proper that we start with the idea of taste which historically precedes the idea of judgment and 'contains the beginnings of the intellectual differentiation we make in judging things' (TM 33 / WM 32). Secondly, Gadamer's account of judgment and taste, although insightful, offers an all too limited interpretation and explication of concepts that possess a richness of history. With judgment, he adds little in regards to how we are to understand it as a humanistic concept. He merely states that 'the introduction of the word "judgment" in the eighteenth century was intended to convey the idea of *judicium*, which was considered to be a basic intellectual virtue (29-30 / 27). And insofar as illuminating taste, Gadamer seems fairly content with his reading of Karl Borinski's analysis of Gracian's notion of taste, which more or less denies every kind of aesthetic character and the idea of *Weltklugheit*, focusing primarily on the moralistic quality instead. Consequently, he fails to cover some of the vital details needed for properly grasping the semantic transformations of both concepts. By investigating first taste and then judgment, I hope to fill in those historical gaps to present a clearer picture of the shifts leading to Kant, but additionally to clarify Gadamer's own position regarding both concepts.<sup>21</sup>

The introduction of the expression 'good taste' first began in Spain during the middle of the seventeenth century and gained prominence when the writer, moralist and a leading literary theorist of the Spanish baroque Baltasar Gracián (1601-58) gave full articulation to its meaning. Following the tradition of Machiavelli and Castiglione, Gracián sought to explore the qualities that determine an 'ideal gentleman'. His writings, such as *El héroe* ('The Hero', 1637), *El Político* ('The Politician', 1640) and *El discreto* ('The Man of Discretion', 1646) all reflect and elaborate his inquiry and at the same time reveal the development of the notion of 'taste' (*gusto*). According to Gracián, taste is a mode of knowing, a refined capacity functioning alongside the *ingenium*, which enables one to rise above the sphere of private interests and predilections to make judgments that

<sup>21</sup> Much of the present examining of judgment and taste will adduce and rely on the authority of Alfred Bacumier, who's work *Das Irrationalitätsproblem in der Ästhetik und Logik des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Darmstadt, 1967), provides an extensive historical account of both concepts. Although Gadamer does not cite Bacumier or even bother to mention his name, he was nonetheless very much aware of Bacumier's critical writings concerning the semantic developments of judgment and taste. One other reference which has been a valued service to the present study is Emilio Hidalgo-Serna's contribution to Gracián studies, *Das ingeniose Denken Bei Baltasar Gracián*.

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are right and good. It is, in short, a form of intellectual differentiation, a capacity of the mind that comes from nature, which has to be accomplished and perfected. However, this (inner sense) ability cannot be taught through demonstration but only acquired through its repeated conscious practices, i.e. cultivation (*cultura*). What is more, to possess taste is to have '*praktisch Menschenkenntnis*' (practical knowledge concerning the nature of human being) and *indicium commune* (common judgment). Consequently, taste is a social phenomenon, and as such it is the rudimentary fabric of culture. Good taste, we can say, is a sensitivity to what is common to all; it denotes a certain capacity of 'knowing' what to do (or not to do) and how to act (or not to act) in every social situation. For instance, the language one uses with a teacher or employer is often different in manner and tone from the language which one uses with a friend or a family member. This is because a certain degree of familiarity warrants a particular way of speaking (and behaving). Taste is that which instinctively and immediately advises us to adjust, to properly measure and distance ourselves according to the social circumstance and employ the necessary language or behaviour, so that we are not left stupefied or to feel out of place in a particular situation. But this does not mean that it always corresponds with society, for taste does not blindly observe communal *fashion*. In fact, taste can often reject what is popular, in that what is popular does not always indicate 'tastefulness'. Thus, generally speaking, we can say that a man of taste is a man of discretion, a perfect cosmopolitan, an esteemed and educated character who possesses the '*je ne sais quoi*', knowing, for instance, how to deal with every subject matter and behaving accordingly to every concrete situation. Guided by his taste, he is neither hesitant nor uneasy or hindered by societal pressures when making decisions. In fact, 'he is able to make distinctions and choices consciously and from a superior position' (TM 34 / WM 32).

Gracián's profound insights into taste was revolutionary, in a manner of speaking, for it evoked a new idea of social cultivation (*Bildung*) which became a widespread spirit, influencing not only Spain but also countries, such as Italy, France, England and Germany. Gadamer notes, 'this [new] ideal of social *Bildung* seems to emerge everywhere in the wake of absolutism and its suppression of the hereditary aristocracy' (ibid.). Indeed, by the end of the seventeenth century, Gracián's ideal of *Bildung* began to replace the old notion of refinement based on the class structure of the feudal system. Birth and rank were no longer considered to be the qualities that determine a cultivated individual or society; instead, it was the capacity to recognise and learn the proper value of thing and actions, by

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appropriately distancing oneself from the narrowness of one's prejudices and self-interest, which came to signify a *gebildet* individual and a society of cultured individuals. To put this into better perspective, Gracián, in a sense, democratises the idea of culture and cultured. He in effect dispenses the antiquated idea that wealth or pedigree denotes culture or the cultured, and in place puts forward the notion that any individual who can educate himself and acquire the necessary understanding of good judgment can indeed become an accomplished man of culture. For this reason, it is not hard to see why Gracián's thoughts were considered revolutionary when we view it in the context of seventeenth-century social order. But in France, where Gracián enjoyed the greatest influence, the very ethical and political nature of the new *Bildung* was expanded to include the aesthetics. Taste, together with the aesthetic of the Classics, formed a new way of evaluating art. This came to be known as the aesthetics of '*délicatesse*' and of the '*je ne sais quoi*', which replaced the aesthetics of '*verité*' and '*raison*'. The sense of knowing and distinguishing well and reasonably what is good from bad and proper from improper, thus, became the governing standard for judging art. The aesthetics of '*délicatesse*' however never reached an actual theory of aesthetics, though it marked an important first step. The first aesthetic theories actually began in Italy, where Gracián's notion of taste encountered another significant modification. Muratori's treatise *Delle riflessioni sopra il Buon Gusto nelle Scienze e nelle Arti* was perhaps one of the earliest, if not the first, theory on aesthetics using the notion of taste. Muratori's theory essentially relates good taste to poetry since every poet has to distinguish the basic principles and the beauty within his poetry, which he wants to create. But Muratori does not completely limit the notion of taste to poetry but applies it in connection to the distinction of the beauty and the good in the sphere of sciences, arts and practical action of man. Although he himself never mentions Gracián in his work, the preface of *Delle riflessioni sopra il Buon Gusto nelle Scienze e nelle Arti* supplies an introductory segment by Bernardo Trevisano who notes that the notion of good taste has its origins in Spain. But more importantly, Trevisano also explains that taste is a feeling which functions under authority of reason. Consequently, taste no longer has a direct link with *ingenium*. Trevisano in effect places the notion of judgment, intelligence and wit, what Gracián had understood as belonging to the tribunal of taste, under the rule of reason.

In Germany the introduction of the notion of taste came late and via the French aesthetic concept of *bon goût* (good taste). Christian Thomasius (1625-1728), a lawyer and philosopher from Leipzig, was one of the first Germans to write a treatise over taste,

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but erroneously he understood taste as a French phenomenon rather than a Spanish one. Thomasius used the metaphorical notion of *bon goût*, taken from *L'Homme de Cour* – the French translation of *Oráculo manual* – but only in a moralistic way. For him, *bon goût* stood directly in connection to the doctrine of *prudencia* (intelligence), and reflected a capacity to distinguish imperfectabilities: in the senses, in the effects, in inclinations, in understanding and the will. It was an intelligence which moved one to distinguish and choose what is right from wrong. The practical meaning of taste, i.e. the fine art of living, which Gracián had intended, was too alien for Thomasius. In fact, the concept of taste in Germany never quite developed as it did in the romance-language cultures – that is, in Germany it more or less developed from the sphere of thought than from the life of a cultivated society. This was partly in response to and under the influence of the analytic philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff.

Both Leibniz and Wolff, in formulating their theory of knowledge and of understanding, divided cognitive knowledge into two parts: 'perfect knowledge', i.e. the 'superior upper part' and 'imperfect knowledge', i.e. the 'inferior lower part'. Whereas the former consists of clear and distinct ideas brought to light through reason, the latter was thought to yield only arbitrary and confused ideas, deriving from imagination and sense. But given the contrariety, reason and sense nonetheless possess continuity, according to Wolff. Both he and Leibniz argued that the obscured or confused ideas, though imperfect, could become perfectly clear and distinct ideas if we correctly apply our intellect. In theory, this meant that it was only a degree of perfection, which separated rational knowledge from sensate knowledge. Further, qualitatively speaking, knowledge deriving from sense was understood as a division of cognitive knowledge, although an inferior one.

Taste, in line with both Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy, was perceived as a lower cognitive faculty that was able to generate knowledge and understanding through sensate judgment. However around 1730, the concept of judgment (*Urteil*) began to replace the concept of taste. According to Alfred Baeumler, Joh. Ulrich König a well read scholar of French aesthetics and Johann Christoph Gottsched both began to use the concept of taste (*Geschmack*) and concept of judgment (*Urteil*) interchangeably. There are several different streams of development which could explain why taste was used interchangeably with judgment and finally replaced by judgment. Let us examine two probable causes of this phenomenon.

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König, explains Baeumler, differentiates the concept of taste into two distinct ideas: 'particular good taste' and 'universal good taste'. The latter, König argues, is based on reason. Universal good taste, he contends, teaches through sensation to respect highly what reason would have approved infallibly, given that there was enough time for reflection. Taste is a 'finished sensation' or 'finished examination' in contrast to the act of judging as a thoughtful, deliberate and reflective examination. Someone who possesses universal taste 'senses' in the way a reasonable man would think, that is, although he is not a scholar, he judges 'after-the-fact' like a scholar. The sensation of the beautiful, we can say in our contemporary language, is not rational but 'rationable'. Thus König speaks in terms of 'inner sensation of understanding' (*innerliche Empfindung des Verstandes*) or 'taste of understanding' (*Geschmack des Verstandes*), which he calls a word 'from a new concept'. The concept of universal good taste is eventually interchanged with judgment in order to designate the ration(*able*) aspect of taste.

An other reason for the interchange between taste and judgment can be found in Gottsched, whose preoccupation centred around 'germanising' taste due to its connection with the English concept of sentiment. Taste in respect to moral and aesthetic judgments was closely related to the notion of sentiment. According to the English moral philosophers, sentiment is not based on reason nor does it obey reason. However, for Gottsched, reason is the sole basis of judgment. This opposing contrast between taste-sentiment relationship and taste-judgment seems to have influenced Gottsched to replace altogether the concept of judgment for taste, adding his own touch to the notion of judgment by elevating it to the higher cognitive faculty.

With Gottsched the term judgment, similar to the concept of *sensus communis* which Vico had conceptualised, was understood to reflect an internal sensibility, a kind of inner knowledge, which enables one to subsume a particular representation correctly and to practice what one knows. Kant himself acknowledges in his First Critique that 'the power of judgment is a peculiar talent that cannot be taught at all but can only be practised. This is also the reason why the power of judgment is the specific [feature] of so-called mother-wit, for whose lack no school can compensate'.<sup>22</sup> However, because the philosophical community of the German Enlightenment did not consider judgment as a faculty which could subsume a particular under a universal, Gottsched's elevating of judgment to the higher faculties of knowledge was therefore short-lived, and judgment was again relegated

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to the lower cognitive faculty, rendering imperfect knowledge, as Leibniz and Wolff had first determined. But if it could be proved that judgment is able to subsume a particular under a universal, then this would mean that judgment is a concept or rule rather than a sense, and that its functions would depend on and follow yet a higher principle to guide its own application; however, such is not the case. The workings of judgment are parallel to the faculty of sense rather than to the faculty of reason, for it relies entirely on concrete experience. As we have already seen, in the Third Critique Kant takes the concept of judgment one step further than his predecessors by making a distinction between cognitive (determinate) judgments and aesthetic (reflective) judgments. Through this differentiation, he established the autonomy for aesthetics; however, concurrently he removed all of the moral or social implications that characterised taste. The significance of taste as an avenue of knowledge and a mode of being was utterly replaced with the notion of reflective judgment, which offers only a subjective universality without any cognitive value.

For Gadamer, however, the concept of judgment possesses a similar meaningfulness as the pre-enlightenment understanding of taste that Gracián had developed. 'Whosoever has sound judgment' Gadamer writes, 'is not thereby enabled to judge particulars under universal viewpoints, but he knows what is important, i.e. he sees things from right and sound points of view' (TM 31 / WM 29). Clearly in Gadamer's view judgment is not so much a faculty as a moral sense inherent in all men that must be cultivated. It is in this sense that judgment – that which guides taste – is *sensus communis*:

Everyone has enough 'sense of the common' (*gemeinen Sinn*), i.e. judgment that it can be expected to show a 'sense of community' (*Gemeinsinn*), genuine moral and civic solidarity, but that means judgment of right and wrong and civic concern for the common 'good' (31 / 29).

Judgment, as a humanistic concept, epitomises a special way of knowing and of being. It cannot be taught, as Kant had rightly pointed out, but only acquired through concrete application, but once secured, all the 'knowledge of the world' cannot replace the 'wisdom' of sound judgment, which functions almost like intuition; that is, judgment articulates itself quickly and almost without notice. In this sense, it possesses superiority over rational thinking, in that it asserts itself even prior to the act of thinking, offering immediate practical knowledge. This knowledge is not simply self-generating and self-validating, but it is *sensus communis*; common knowledge that is developed. One may

<sup>23</sup> Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason* 133a/172b. 206.

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argue, however, that with each individual and community, there are different ideas of culture, common sense, judgment and taste, and thus point to arguments of relativism. But it seems quite obvious that beyond the discrepancies of exact definition or understanding of what common sense, judgment or taste might be, every individual and community clearly possesses some ideal of culture, some version of common sense, judgment and taste, which functions in a socially cohesive manner. However individual or slightly varying the meaning of these humanistic concepts may be – due to geographical and historical boundaries mostly – the concepts themselves are no less universal, for they are exercised in every human community.<sup>23</sup> Hence, combined together, the humanistic concepts represent a tradition by which every society cultivates itself in coming to be what it 'could be', i.e. in the Heideggerian sense the humanistic concepts represent the potentiality-for-being. These ideas are the immediate sources of our practical knowledge, our pragmatic know-how. Through them, we learn to interpret and understand others and ourselves in such a way which eludes all methodical thinking. What is more, they are the foundation on which we establish our human communities, and through community we (re)formulate and develop these ideas. This process is dialectical, ever continuous and progressing.

### § 3.4 Tradition and Language

Certainly, Gadamer is not concerned with showing merely the history of humanistic concepts. Through the four concepts, he illuminates the 'tradition' in which we stand and through which we exist. By this I mean that he unconceals and brings to consciousness that which remains, for the most part, invisible to us. 'Tradition', as Richard Palmer explains, 'is so transparent a medium that it is invisible to us – as invisible as water to a fish'.<sup>24</sup> This means, tradition is like the air we breathe. It surrounds us and encompasses the whole of our being. We are immersed in it so much so that we more often fail to recognise that we are in this tradition – but as much as we are within this tradition, so too is tradition immersed in us. But let us take the notion of tradition one step further. Tradition is not simply the 'medium' in which we move and participate in the lifeworld or in the literal sense something simply handed down, but we are the very tradition which we inherit, i.e. 'being is tradition'. From Gadamer's viewpoint we do not fall into error if we

<sup>23</sup> We may expect as the geographical boundaries continues to recede due to modern technology that even the content of the concepts become more universal.



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follow tradition, as Decartes had presumed. Rather by understanding tradition, we come into being. This is why the humanistic concepts are so important for Gadamer. They represent modes of being and knowing, which bear significance on the present as well as on the future. What we are in the present and what we strive to become in the future are conditioned by what we have inherited from the past. Our understanding for the present and the future is always conditioned by and is the product of the sum of prejudgements or prejudices which we inherit from the past. In Gadamer's view then all interpretation and understanding involve preconceptions which we cannot escape. As historical beings, prejudices are embedded into our very being through tradition; consequently, how we see the world and how we approach it is always through an 'effective historical consciousness' (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). As Joel Weinsheimer points out, 'This phrase refers to the fact that not only is consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) affected by history but that it is also conscious of that fact. It is self-conscious'.<sup>25</sup> But we should be careful not to assume that by being conscious or aware of our historicity that we can separate from history and achieve objectivity. We can no more step out from our history than we can step out from our shadow. Rather we always move within history. It is the guiding force of our lives. This is what is meant by 'being is tradition'.

But now let us ask what the mode of being of tradition is? How do we communicate tradition? According to Gadamer, 'Being that can be understood is language' (432 / 450). As mentioned above, 'language' for Gadamer 'is the universal medium in which understanding itself is realised'. It is the 'house of being', the necessary prerequisite for all hermeneutical understanding. This seems to affirm then that the being of tradition is language. But how are we to understand language itself? Gadamer states that we should not confuse language 'as grammar or as lexicon' but rather see it as that which constitutes the hermeneutical event '... in the coming into language of that which has been said in the tradition: an event that is at once assimilation and interpretation' (TM 421 / WM 439). According to Gadamer, language is not merely a means to an end, made available to the consciousness, but it is an autonomous way of being that mediates an ontologically ascertained truth in which *Dasein* participates. And since language possesses self-sovereignty, it obeys its own 'laws'. Its mastery, control and regulation do not succumb to the power of the schematising capacity of the human consciousness. From this

<sup>24</sup> Palmer. *Hermeneutics*. op. cit., 177.

<sup>25</sup> Weinsheimer GH. op. cit., 182.

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perspective, we can clearly see that Gadamer resolutely challenges rational thinking, which presumes that it imparts self-given and unambiguous, definite concepts. He explains, 'It is not just that the use and development of language is a process which has no single knowing and choosing consciousness standing over against it . . . ' (TM 420-421 / WM 439). Jean Grondin also insightfully observes that truth escapes the dominion of the subject and takes refuge in the logoi, that is in language in which being reflects itself.<sup>26</sup>

According to Gadamer, in language we become home in a world, which is carried and mediated by tradition. To this extent, language is always closely bound to a world, that is, the 'world is linguistic in nature' (401 / 419). The autonomy of language therefore must not be understood in the sense that language has a life independent from the world which comes into being through language. Analogous to the world, which is only world in so far as it comes into language, language has its real being only in the fact that the world is *re-presented* within it (*ibid.*). Every language therefore represents a particular view of the world.

For Gadamer, it is in the interdependent relation between the view of language (*Sprachansicht*) and the view of the world (*Weltansicht*) that real importance for the problem of hermeneutics lies. In communicating with other times, i.e. 'epochs', cultures and people, we bring our own view of language and subsequently also our view of the world to this dialogue. This means that we are formed by the particular language we acquire and that we have consequently also a particular (prejudiced or presupposed) view of the world. This particular view of the world and of language is not to be misunderstood as a limitation or short-coming in the acquisition of a foreign subject matter, for instance, a foreign language, but that it is the necessary prerequisite in 'the exercise of this capacity of understanding [which] always means that [that] what is said has a claim over one, and this is impossible if one's own "view of the world and of language" is not also involved' (401 / 418).

According to Gadamer:

Language is the record of finitude, not because the structure of human language is multifarious, but because every language is constantly being formed and developed, the more it expresses its experience of the world. It is finite not because it is not at

<sup>26</sup> Jean Grondin, *Hermeneutische Wahrheit? Zum Wahrheitsbegriff Hans-Georg Gadamer's* (2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed. 1994, Beltz Athenäum Verlag, Weinheim), p. 187.

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once all other language, but simply because it is language. We have considered important turning-points in European thought concerning language, and from these we have learned that the event of language corresponds to the finitude of man in a far more radical sense than is brought out in Christian thinking about the word. It is the centre of language, whence our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfolds . . . . It is the centre of language alone that, related to the totality of beings, mediates the finite, historical nature of man to himself and to the world. The word is not simply, as held in mediaeval thought, the perfection of the species. If the existent is represented in the thinking mind, this is not the reflection of a pre-given order of being, the true nature of which is apparent to an infinite spirit (that of the creator). But nor is the word an instrument that can construct, like the language of mathematics, an objective universe of beings that can be manipulated by numbers. (415 / 433)

It is through language, then, that the 'fusion of horizons' occurs, meaning that the horizon of the past and horizon of present coalesce to mediate the phenomenon of understanding. In other words, the linguisticity of understanding is the concretion of the 'effective historical consciousness', which is embodied in the fusion of horizons. In communicating, language hands down to us something which it already understands. It brings together two different world and forms understanding. Without language, we would have no world, no basis for communicating, no understanding. Thus even prior to the very act of vocalisation through language, language already understands.

In the next chapter, we shall look at how the experience of art also involves the hermeneutical experience of language. For Gadamer, language does not necessarily refer to 'spoken language'. In fact, in the experience of art, no vocal proclamations occur, yet nonetheless Gadamer demonstrate, by using the analogy of game-playing, that a dialogue or conversation takes place between the work of art and its beholder. This of course implies that language is involved in art, for every conversation requires language.

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### § 4 Discovering the Truthfulness of Art

In examining the guiding humanistic concepts Gadamer has clearly shown that there are knowledge-claims beyond the sphere of the natural sciences, and that one does not necessarily need to refer to method to uncover, prove and acquire truth. By exposing and substantiating the knowledge-claims that exist beyond the sovereignty of 'reason' and method, Gadamer in effect 'pre-demonstrates' the legitimacy of truth-experiences in the *Geisteswissenschaften*. As we have seen, truth uncovered through *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgement and taste is different from the kind of truth discovered through methodical rationality. The knowledge-claims that the humanistic concepts reveal are by no means 'absolute certainties'. They are only certain in the sense that they belong to the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). Being such, these knowledge-claims are opened to corrections and modifications as they continuously unconceal themselves in the movement towards the whole.<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the human sciences, their claim to truth is no different from that of the guiding humanistic concepts, for the 'truth event' of the *Geisteswissenschaften* also belongs to the lifeworld. The human sciences do not disclose corresponding or relational absolutes. Rather they unconceal the 'whatness' and the 'howness' of being. Philosophy, music, literature, art and all the like disciplines participate in the inexhaustible quest of unconcealing the very being of life to which we are so close and yet ironically too distant to fully realise its extraordinariness. When we watch a Shakespearean play, for example *Hamlet*, it is the something of 'being', which it captures, that demands our attention and provokes our minds to thought. When we as audience listen to (and so often whisper along with) Hamlet during his famous soliloquy, 'To be, or not to be', we feel as if we understand Hamlet. But what we understand is not so much the meaning of being a prince or being Danish but the immeasurable depth of human affection. We participate with Hamlet in asking ourselves the very same question that he imposes on himself: 'what is the meaning of being?'<sup>2</sup> The play *Hamlet* in essence awakens and disturbs our consciousness to '[t]he heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to'.<sup>3</sup> In this way it adds to our understanding of life. In our 'forgetfulness of being', plays such as *Hamlet*

<sup>1</sup> I should like to remind the reader here that the 'whole', which I am speaking of, refers specifically to what Hegel believed as the absolute. Whereas Hegel saw the arrival at the whole of truth or absolute truth for the human sciences, Gadamer never sees the triumphant end. The movement towards the truth as a whole exists as long as being exists. For Gadamer it is not so much the arrival at the whole of truth as the continuous movement towards that whole which represents the greatest value to humanity.

<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare. *Hamlet* (III. I. 55).

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offer us a glimpse of that which often goes unnoticed in our strenuous routine of daily living. It shares with us a deeper sense of being by disclosing the intensities of human qualities, such as joy and suffering. But how are we to assure ourselves that what we experience is not something merely given by the 'play' of our mental faculties? What is it that creates pleasure and gives understanding in the aesthetic experience? To disclose how we understand and experience truth in the human sciences, Gadamer first turns to the experience of art. Through art, he tries to show the phenomenological nature of truth and how we are to enter into a 'philosophical conversation' (*Philosophisches Gespräch*) and 'listen' to what the work of art and the human sciences in general has to 'say'. The concept of listening is important for Gadamer, in that listening requires a sense of seriousness, attentiveness and thoughtfulness as opposed to merely hearing something without thought.

If we recall, according to Kant, to assert that 'x is beautiful' underlies an harmonious 'free play' between the faculties of imagination and understanding, which creates a 'disinterested' sense of pleasure in the individual making the aesthetic assertion. We should bear in mind in addition that there is nothing in the object which can cause aesthetic pleasure; the object, in Kant's view, merely initiates the play between the faculties. This means that aesthetic sensations are purely subjective and that the judgement of taste is universal only in the sense that everyone also owns the very same capacity to experience the similar interplay, and can therefore offer precisely the same judgement, which is without any cognitive significance. But if there is nothing to be ascribed to the object being viewed in the aesthetic experience, as Kant presumes, what is it then that provokes the initial interplay between imagination and understanding? Could we not simply look at anything, art or non-art, and make it to an object of aesthetic pleasure? Kant's subjectivisation of the aesthetic experience moreover seems to neglect completely the 'category' of the work of art (*Kategorie des Kunstwerkes*).

First we must understand that it was never Kant's intention to propose an aesthetic theory of art. As we have seen in chapter one, his primary concern was to mediate an a priori principle to bridge the gulf between the concept of universal causality, which determines the natural, i.e. 'phenomenal', world and the concept of freedom in some supersensible, 'noumenal' world; this noumenal world, at least as an idea, is said to be constitutive for man's interpretive actions and moral relationships. According to Kant, the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., III, I, 61-2.

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faculty of judgment is the bridge that closes the gap between the mental faculties of pure knowledge and desire. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kant essentially focuses in the *Critique of Judgement* on the beauty of nature rather than on beauty of art. It is a consequence of his whole methodical approach that Kant does not consider the 'work-character' of art. However this does not imply that Kant's *Third Critique* did not have a major impact on aesthetic theory. In fact, it is, as we know, the root of modern aesthetics proper. It is in the *Critique of Judgement* that Kant established the subjective universality of aesthetic judgement. The problem for art and the human sciences altogether is that in doing so Kant also superficially narrows the concept of knowledge wholly to the possibility of 'pure natural sciences', ultimately placing the aesthetic experience and the human sciences' truth-claim on the 'quicksands' of relativism.

To counter the apparent relativistic nature of aesthetic judgement, Gadamer attempts to demonstrate the manifestation of truth in works of art. He defends the truth-claims of art against Kant and his successors, such as Schiller, by asserting that the legitimacy of truth-claims in art is not to be found in the perceiver's own faculties that cause pure aesthetic pleasure, but in the artwork itself which reveals something of 'Being'. The disclosure of 'being' (truth), however is not simply 'there' given by the object. We cannot experience the truth of art as a subject perusing an object. The disclosure of being, according to Gadamer is 'in-between'. That is to say, it is not the subject (the perceiver) nor the object (the artwork itself) that reveals truth, but the 'metaphorical conversation' which emerges between the subject and the object, wherein all notions of subject-object schema are dissolved. By entering into a dialogue with the artwork, its being and the 'Being' it captures transpire phenomenologically and a 'fusion of horizons' occurs. The process of dialogue is best concretised in the notion of play (*Spiel*). Discovering truth in art, Gadamer admits in his autobiographical essay, is no easy task:

The experience of art constitutes a kind of evidence which is both too strong and at the same time not strong enough. It is too strong in the sense that probably no one would venture to extend their faith in scientific progress to the heights of art and try, for instance, to see in Shakespeare an advance over Sophocles, or in Michelangelo an advance beyond Phidias. On the other hand, the evidence of art is

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also too weak in the sense that the artwork withholds the very truth that it embodies and prevents it from becoming conceptually precise.<sup>4</sup>

In revealing the ontological foundations of art, Gadamer attempts to show how we might disclose the truth that the work of art withholds from us. But in order to do so, he argues, we must first break ourselves away from the prejudice of 'aesthetic consciousness', which began with Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805). Schiller's interpretation of Kant, Gadamer explains, was the pivotal turning-point, which 'turned the radical subjectivisation, through which Kant had justified transcendently the judgement of taste and its claim to universality, from a methodical condition to one of content' (TM 73; WM 77).

As an artist Schiller was deeply concerned with the purpose and status of the aesthetic in human experience and its relation to our freedom as morally autonomous beings. He construed in Kant's epistemological discriminations between the phenomenal and the noumenal realms - the realm of nature and the realm of freedom - experiential conflicts in the individual, in which the possibility of exercising freedom is put to question. Kant, as mentioned above, discovered a need to bridge the experiences we encounter in the phenomenal world with the experiences we face in the noumenal world. Out of this need, he published his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* in 1790, in which he reconciled the distance between the phenomenal and the noumenal world through the aesthetic. But for Schiller, Kant's analysis of the beautiful as that which pleases universally and necessarily without a concept, without an interest and embodies purposiveness without a purpose, functioning as a medium between cognitive judgements and moral judgements, did not satisfy the tension between the sensuous and the moral. Moreover, Schiller was convinced that aesthetic judgements, although independent from logical judgements, have a direct relationship with ethics. In his bid to overcome the Kantian perception of the beautiful, the first major challenge for Schiller was to discover a way of defining the beautiful, which Kant claimed was impossible. Schiller decided to compose a philosophical treatise, to be called *Kallias Über die Schönheit*, to show that an objective definition of the beautiful was possible. Although *Kallias* was eventually abandoned, while developing the idea for his philosophical dialogue, Schiller, beginning in 1793, kept a close correspondence with his friend Christian Gottfried Körner over his philosophical project and formulated his famed idea that beauty is '*Freiheit in der Erscheinung*' (Freedom in semblance). In essence this

<sup>4</sup> 'Reflections on My Philosophical Journey', op. cit., 6.

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means that the object of beauty strikes the beholder as being autonomous or removed from the compulsion that ordinarily governs objects in the natural world. That object consequently serves as a representation of freedom, in the sense of moral self-determination, though it shows freedom only in semblance, since all objects in the phenomenal world are subject to the laws of nature. This radical understanding of beauty had far-reaching consequences on Schiller's entire aesthetic theory.

In his later *Ästhetische Briefe* [Aesthetic Letters] · *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* [Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man] – Schiller idealistically advocates the idea of aesthetic cultivation, that is an education through art and for art. What he envisioned was an 'Aesthetic State', a society of aesthetically conditioned consciousness that could inhabit the ideal realm of art, i.e. the realm of 'semblance'. According to Schiller, the world of art is a separate actuality divorced and isolated from the lifeworld. Possessing its own independent principles of construction and internal coherence provided by the imagination, the world of semblance provides man with inner 'psychological' freedom. This means that the power of imagination to form images is self-reliant and need not refer to external nature. From Schiller's standpoint, art does not complement nature and vice versa, as it did for Kant and his predecessors. Instead, it is perceived as something that is to be contrasted with practical reality. The work of art which traditionally fulfilled the role of completing 'its supplementing and fulfilling activity within the areas given and left free by nature' (TM 76; WM 78), is no longer a part of lifeworld. To this extent, *Les beaux arts* are no longer considered as 'a perfecting of reality'. Art is basically divorced from its temporality, its historicity, possessing its own autonomous 'free' world. The cause of '[t]he shift of the ontological definition of the aesthetic to the sphere of aesthetic appearance', Gadamer explains, 'has its theoretical basis in the fact that the domination of the scientific epistemological model leads to the discrediting possibilities of knowing that lies outside this new model (75 / 79-80). But to enter the 'enchanted' world of art, one needs to acquire an 'aesthetic consciousness' and view art as the 'art of beautiful appearance'. Basic to Schiller's aesthetic theory, as we have discussed above, is the concept of 'freedom' (*Freiheit*) and 'semblance' (*Schein*). Schiller contends:

[I]ndifference to reality and interest in semblance may be regarded as a genuine enlargement of humanity and a decisive step towards culture. . . . [T]his affords



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evidence of outward freedom: for as long as necessity dictates, and need drives, imagination remains tied to reality with powerful bonds.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of placing art 'its original context of life, and the religious or secular function which gave it its significance' (76 / 81), Schiller proposes an "ideal kingdom" which is to be defended against all limitation, even against the moralistic guardianship of state and society' (74 / 78). He confers to art its own life and presence, and what is left is a pure work of art. In other word, the aesthetic consciousness demands that the work of art abstract from its original context from which it emerged and from all contextual conditions under which the beholder encounters the work of art. Thus what we call a work of art and what we experience aesthetically consist in a performance of a double abstraction, which Gadamer calls 'aesthetic differentiation'. By displacing art from its original lifeworld context, Schiller creates the necessary 'distance' for objectively viewing art in its purest form, i.e. art as art itself. Through aesthetic differentiation, art becomes atemporal, suspended from time. To this extent, aesthetic consciousness has the character of simultaneity since it claims to embrace everything of quality. That is, '[t]he immediacy with which the purified artwork is present to purified aesthetic consciousness implies the co-presence of all times in the mind of the beholder.'<sup>6</sup> As a consequence of this qualitatively all-embracing aesthetic cultivation, i.e. aesthetic differentiation, which tries 'to make the artwork immediately available to the beholder as pure consciousness to pure consciousness, it renders the two worlds inaccessible to each other, for the purity and immediacy of the aesthetic are achieved by abstracting from the media which permit accessibility between worlds.'<sup>7</sup> That is to say, Schiller's notion of aesthetic cultivation is utterly indifferent to content and leaves art without a specific content, since it abstracts precisely from all media, even including the content which permit us to take a moral, religious or philosophical stand. In this sense, we again arrive at a subjective relativism since 'the aesthetic consciousness is the experiencing centre from which everything considered to be art is measured' (TM 76 / WM 80-81). Moreover the abstraction of art from its world, it seems, is quite artificial and contrived. Schiller's notion of aesthetic consciousness completely disregards the fact that we are temporal beings and that the function of art is rooted within the context of life. When we encounter a work of art, we

<sup>5</sup> See *The Development of German Aesthetic Theory From Kant to Schiller* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994. (Letter XXVI. 4), p. 305.

<sup>6</sup> Joel Weinsheimer GIL op. cit., 93.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

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cannot and do not abstract ourselves from time. Heidegger had poignantly proved our inescapability from temporality in *Being and Time*. We cannot, as it were, step away from our historicity for a few moments to enjoy pleasure deriving from the artistic form of the artwork, which also itself is disconnected from reality. Rather, in the experience of a work of art we do not leave our world, our home so much as we come home. In this respect, the experience of art is ontological. In Heideggerian terms, the experience of art represents a coming into being of what we could be; for the artwork is not a mere pleasure object, but a presentation, transfused into an image, of a truth of being as event. Hence, the work of art is fully continuous with our reality to the extent that it opens up our own world to broaden our self-understanding. That is, it renders knowledge about our being, so that we learn to see the world and our being 'in a new light' – as if anew. Art illuminates our ordinary perception and understanding of life, bringing into view the extraordinary character of life. If indeed the artwork is discontinuous from the lifeworld in which it was born, as Schiller maintains, then art could not illuminate our being and expand our self-understanding. When we separate art and our aesthetically formed consciousness from reality, we are in effect divorcing ourselves from ourselves and entering into a meaningless *cul-de-sac*, called the ideal realm of art. In order to do justice to art, aesthetics must go beyond itself and abandon the "purity" of the aesthetic' writes Gadamer (83 / 88). What this means is that we must overcome all perception of art as objects that stand outside of time. Moreover, we should not pretend to disconnect ourselves from our time to view art as an object of sensuous form that renders subjective pleasure. Gadamer asserts:

The pantheon of art is not a timeless presence which offers itself to pure aesthetic consciousness but the assembled achievements of the human mind as it has realised itself historically. Aesthetic experience also is a mode of self-understanding. But all self-understanding takes place in relation to something else that is understood and includes the unity and sameness of this other. Inasmuch as we encounter the work of art in the world and a world in the individual work of art, this does not remain a strange universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in it, and that means that we preserve the discontinuity of the experience in the continuity of our existence. Therefore it is necessary to adopt an attitude to the beautiful and to art that does not lay claim to immediacy, but corresponds to the historical reality of man (86 / 92).

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In Gadamer's view, we need to overcome the primacy of self-consciousness and place art back into his true historical context, but to do so he states that we must first return to the phenomenological character of aesthetic experience. Art, he contends, unconceals and brings to light something of 'Being', which the artist has captured. So then, how are we to witness the unfolding of truth that art possesses? For this, Gadamer introduces the concept of 'play' (*Spiel*) and draws an analogy between playing games and the experience of art. In his view the phenomenon of play is an essential function of human life. Human culture, he maintains, is unthinkable and impossible without this element.<sup>8</sup>

### § 4.1 The Dialogical Process of Play

'Play' (or 'Game'), Gadamer explains, is the mode of being of the work of art and not simply a subjective attitude or a state of consciousness, which produces self-created pleasure, as Kant and Schiller had understood – that is, play, in connection to aesthetics, neither refers to the mental activity (i.e. the 'free play' between the faculties of imagination and understanding) of a creator or viewer of art nor to the freedom of human subjectivity. Play itself, Gadamer tells us, is not serious, for it is merely a spectacle, a form of entertainment. There is however a seriousness to be found in play when it is being played. In the moment of playing, a sense of seriousness emerges from the play and provides 'life' to the game. This seriousness of game creates a certain new reality with its own overriding norms and guiding principles, which is independent of the consciousness of the player, that the player, upon entering this new autonomous space – whether a football pitch or a sports arena – must observe. In doing so, he concedes his own concerns and submits to the 'authority' of the game. As a result the player, participating in playing, is transformed and is no longer himself. His actions are not governed by his own will but by the will of the game; consequently, his actions are not the *subject* of the game but rather the responses to the tasks the game imposes. The true *subject*, then, is the 'happening' or movement of the game itself. Thus we say: in playing, there 'is' play (game):

The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game tends to master the players. Even when it is a case of games in which one seeks to accomplish tasks that one has set oneself, there is a risk whether or not it

<sup>8</sup> See also *The Relevance of the Beautiful* op.cit. Gadamer wrote this essay some fourteen years after *Truth and Method*. It represents an expansion of his initial concept of play. The leading question in this essay focuses on how we can expect help from classical aesthetics in view of the experimental practice of art today. Gadamer tries to find an answer to this question by employing the concepts of play, symbol and festival as the anthropological basis of our experience of art.

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will 'work', 'succeed', and 'succeed again', which is the attraction of the game. The real subject of the game (this is shown in precisely those experiences in which there is only a single player is not the player, but instead the game itself. (95-96 / 102)

But despite the dominance and normative authority that game possesses over the player; the player is no less essential. In fact, play depends on and requires the players. If it were not so, can we really say that there is football (- game) without football players? Is golf, for instance, what is summarised in a book of rules, or reflected in a set of strategies? What is poker or snooker without poker players and snooker players playing? Here, it becomes evident that a game's concrete existence only comes into being when it is played out. Without the player(s) the possibility of play does not exist. Thus we can say that the player completes the play in the same sense the play completes the player, i.e., the play gives identity to the player. For this reason Gadamer calls games 'self-representations'. With this in mind, now let us return for a moment to the assertion that game is the 'happening' or movement of itself. This claim seems to suggest two things: first, that play is capable of changing. To be sure, play in its disclosure can shift randomly according to different kinds of situations and unpredictable circumstances. For example, although the rules and reality of a given game does not change at all, different players or strategies and even environmental conditions under which play unfolds itself all to some extent determine how the game will appear in its movement. Although a football match-*play* in Berlin is a different 'match-play' from a football match-*play* in London, except for the variation in its unfolding, play 'happens' in both places.

The second aspect of claiming game as the happening or movement of itself seems to suggest that play is not a tangible object. For example, a chessboard and chess pieces do not make up the game of chess. Rather, as we have seen, it is the happening of the play itself, the movement which guides the players who have committed and engaged themselves in the act of 'serious' playing in the 'reality/world of game', that is 'Play'. This seems to make clear that there is no subject-object schema in play. The player as subject is no longer the subject, and the play as object is no longer a true object. What is left is the disclosure of play as a 'happening' where the subject and object coalesce therein: 'Hence the mode of being of play is not such that there must be a subject [or an object] who takes up a playing attitude in order that the game may be played' (93 / 99). Rather, 'the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player is fundamentally acknowledged,

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[ . . . ] if one starts from the medial sense of the word *spielen*' ( 94 / 100). Thus we are quite familiar with phrases like something is 'playing' somewhere or at some time, or something is going on (*daß sich etwas abspielt*) or that something is at play (*daß etwas im Spiele ist*).

To illustrate the phenomenon of play, let us take tennis as an example. When two tennis players step onto a court, they, in a sense, leave their life-realm for the 'concrete world of play', and as play commences, the seriousness of playing takes over the players – and not the players over the play, as subject standing over against an object. The seriousness can be seen in the fact that both players ardently run in and around the boundaries of the court, chasing after a small yellow ball in order to prevail and fulfil the purpose of the game. Additionally, in playing, both players adhere to or at least try to stick to the rules, purposes and protocols of the game. Their actions in effect are governed by the movement of the game. A tennis player, for example, knows when and from where he is to serve a ball. He also knows when the ball is 'in' (to continue play) and when it is 'out' (to end play). These are rules to which he commits from the very beginning of play to its very end. What is more, he understands the penalties for breaking a rule of play, and attempts to avoid violating all given rules. This compliance – almost blind obedience – to rule(s) is part of the seriousness that keeps the play moving until the game's conclusion. To completely disregard or defy the of rule(s) of play implies that there is no seriousness and thus no genuine play. The obvious implication of all this is '[t]he players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation through the players' (92 / 98). Yet tennis, to be tennis (- game), requires players. Without participants to play, there cannot be a happening of tennis, i.e. no phenomenon of play. 'The peculiarity of games is thus that, on the one hand, they have authority over their participants, determining their goals and aspirations for the duration of the game, while on the other they exist in a concrete sense only through the participation of their players.'<sup>9</sup> This phenomenon demonstrates that even though the participants of a game do not invent the game, the game does not exist until it is actually played. Gadamer illustrates quite nicely the implicit relation between 'autonomy' and 'dependency' by employing the image of festival celebrations:

<sup>9</sup> Roy J. Howard. *Three Faces of Hermeneutics*. (Berkeley: University of California press, 1982), p. 143.

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A festival exists only in being celebrated. This is not to say that it is of a subjective character and has its being only in the subjectivity of those celebrating. Rather the festival is celebrated because it is there.' (TM 110 / WM 118).

In its disclosure as play, tennis or any other game cannot be viewed in terms of a subject-object dichotomy. There is no 'I' and 'it'. In the event of playing, the 'I' or 'me', i.e. the subject aspect, and the 'it', as the object, collapses and the only *subject* left is the movement, which is itself the play. What is more, this movement can never be repeated exactly in the same manner twice. As long as there is playing, play exists but with each new event of play, the unfolding of itself is different.

What occurs in the experience of playing games, Gadamer suggests, is analogous to what occurs in the experience of art. When one encounters a creation of art, e.g., examining a painting by Picasso or reading a poem by Rilke, a play begins, but not as 'free play' of imagination and understanding. Play which occurs in the experience of art is not an event thriving in the consciousness of the participating viewer, but rather as in game-playing, it is a 'happening', an event of disclosure and hiddenness. The experience of an artwork, like game-playing, creates a totally new environment into which the viewer of the artwork enters. There the viewer loses himself in the experience – without the forgetfulness of being – letting the play guide him; consequently, art has normative priority over the viewer.<sup>10</sup> A person looking at a van Gogh does not say to himself, 'I think I'll look at the right corner of the painting and then move to the left before heading down to the bottom-left of the work'. He simply engages himself with the artwork, and through that engagement, allows the play of art to unfold itself -- that is to say, let art reveal itself. The viewer has no control of the happening of art, but simply participates by being engaged. We should not forget that to experience a work of art, in similar respect to game-playing, also requires a sense of seriousness. A person who is kicking a basketball cannot claim that he is seriously playing basketball. He is merely kicking an object; consequently, there is no play. Likewise, an onlooker who offers a mere glance to an artwork cannot claim that he experienced art; at best, he enjoyed briefly the pleasure of sense perception from the form of an object called a work of art. Thus, seriousness – that is an open willingness for engagement – constitutes an important element in the experience of art.

<sup>10</sup> The separate reality of art however does not mean that the realm of art is totally closed and discontinuous with the reality of the lifeworld. In fact, as we mentioned above, the work of art is simply the transformation of the lifeworld reality, i.e. the truth of being, into an expressive image. The artist does not create that which does not belong to the

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Although the work of art has a normative priority over the viewer, the necessity of a viewer is fundamental for the existence of an artwork. Works of art are representations, which only have concrete existence in being viewed. But even with a viewer to see the work of art, the experience of art itself cannot occur without a sense of willingness for engagement – a metaphorical dialogue, if you will. In the experience of art we participate in a philosophical conversation, according to Gadamer. The beholder brings to this experience what he knows, what he has experienced, i.e. his history, but so too does the work of art. The artistic creation, Gadamer contends, also possesses its own authentic being. In fact, a work of art represents the ‘experience of being’ which the artist has transfused into an expressive image. As a creation of man, it therefore possesses history and yet at the same time because it is a creation (*Gebilde*) ‘the manifestation in question has in a strange way transcended the process in which it originated, or has relegated that process to the periphery. It is set forth in its own appearance as a self-sufficient creation’.<sup>17</sup> In the aesthetic experience a fusion of horizons occurs between the artwork and its beholder. The history of the art and the history of the viewer coalesce, creating the dialectic process through which the truth of being unconceals. The aesthetic moment, we must keep in mind, is a highly dynamic and flowing movement during which truth reveals and conceals itself simultaneously. Hence, we speak in terms of listening to what the work of art has to ‘say’, what it has to reveal. This to and fro movement of questioning and answering is the dialogical structure of understanding in the human sciences. It is an endless process in perpetual motion since truth is unconcealment and hiddenness.

Because of the dual nature of truth, when one experiences art (listening to a symphony, reading a poem, examining a painting etc. . .), that experience is always different. Although the work of art itself as an object remains essentially the same, i.e. self-identical, its content however constantly changes with each new encounter by the viewer. It is ‘[a]n entity that exists only by always being something different.’ . . . [‘Seiendes, das nur ist, indem es stets ein Anderes ist . . .’] (TM 110 / WM 117). Just as the content of games is concretised in the particular action and attitude of their players, the content and the meaning of works of art are concretised by the action and attitude of their audience. Gadamer tries to elucidate this position by means of the example of the performance of a play:

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human experience. Art is the embodiment of experience. That is, the artist has captured the truth of being that he himself has experienced. The coherence between the two realities is thus ontological.

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Their [the players or here actor's and actress'] mode of participation in the game is no longer determined by the fact that they are completely absorbed in it, but by their playing their role in relation and regard to the whole of the play, in which not they, but the audience is to become absorbed. When a play activity becomes a play in the theatre a total switch takes place. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He - and not the player - is the person for and in whom the play takes place. . . . In that the play is presented for him [the spectator], it becomes apparent that it bears within itself a meaning that must be understood and that can therefore be detached from the behaviour of the player. Basically the difference between the player and the spectator is removed here. The requirement that the play itself be intended in its meaningfulness is the same for both.<sup>11</sup>(99 / 105)

If the meaning of works of art only exist in relation to the audience and their particular circumstances in which they encounter the work of art (text, symphony, sculpture, painting etc.), the meaning of works of art is in some sense created and completed by the beholder. Thus the beholder who experiences works of art is essentially necessary for the possibility of art to possess significant meaningfulness. Here it seems that we run into the question of relativism again. If the meaning of an artwork depends on the beholder, the meaning of it then could vary infinitely, according to each viewer. But the beholder, Gadamer claims, is not completely free to choose capriciously the meaning of a work of art. The beholder is permitted a fair degree of freedom, but this does not imply that he or she is free simply to interpret or dream up what one wishes. For an interpretation to be an interpretation of a particular work of art and not for something other, it must be in some sense logically constrained by the given work of art itself. The particular artwork, in other words, exercises a degree of determination over the beholder's response to it, otherwise criticism would seem to fall into utter anarchy. Just as games are dominating over their players, the work of art or the representation or performance of it also has a dominating force over its audience. In other words, just as the player of a game is flexible in playing the game within the framework of given rules and conventions, as flexible is the audience in interpreting works of art, i.e. giving meaning to it. Players can not change the rules of the game otherwise they would not play the same game. Of course this leaves the question open, what constitutes the meaning of a work of art, for example the meaning of a text? The meaning of a work of art is certainly not determined by the intention of its original

<sup>11</sup> Gadamer. 'Play of Art' in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*. op. cit., 126.



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creator, the author of a novel or the composer of a symphony. The author simply provides the framework in which the work of art is to be interpreted. The meaning of a particular work of art is not to be reduced to the intention of the artist, since this would disregard and neglect the autonomous character of the work of art. As we stated earlier, in Gadamer's view art is an attempt to represent truth. 'Reducing its meaning to an expression of its author's creativity reflects both, a failure to recognise its autonomy and, more importantly an unjustifiable restriction on the knowledge it contains.'<sup>12</sup> The meaning or the truth of a given text, such as the Bible, continues to disclose itself in conversation. Through the fusion of the self-hood of the artwork and self-hood of the beholder, the meaningfulness of the art comes to light. But this does not imply that one person knows all or absolute truth:

One never obtains a final answer that one now "knows." Nor does one take from it relevant information, and that takes care of that! One cannot fully harvest the information that resides in an artwork so that it is, so to speak, consumed, as is the case with communications that merely advise us of something. Apprehending a poetic work, whether it comes to us through the real ear or only through a reader listening with an inner ear, presents itself basically as a circular movement in which answers strike back as questions and provoke new answers. . . . An art work is never exhausted. It never becomes empty. . . . No work of art addresses us always in the same way.<sup>13</sup>

The truth of art and all of the human sciences is in a sense a great 'living puzzle' which we, as a human community, must piece together. Because it is living, it is always changing, evolving as it continues to disclose and hide itself. The living character of truth is what makes our understanding of it a challenge, for it evades all interpretations and fortifies itself relentlessly against all endeavours to confine it into the identity of a concept.

### § 4.2 Understanding Authority

To aid our understanding of art, Gadamer also speaks of listening to authority. The concept of authority, Gadamer explains, does not promote the idea of superiority of power, which demands blind obedience. To listen to authority instead signifies that one owns the humility and the willingness to concede superior insight to the other voices that resound tradition and the past. In Gadamer's view, listening to authority means the suspension of disbelief. It is optimism or open faith to the idea that 'other' has not only something

<sup>12</sup> Georgia Wamke. *op. cit.*, 55.

<sup>13</sup> 'Reflections on My Philosophical Journey', *op. cit.*, 44.

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different to say but also a better insight from which one can learn. Gadamer essentially adopts the Socratic *docta ignorantia*: the sustained awareness of not-knowing (*das Wissen des Nicht-wissens*). For Gadamer human wisdom involves a conscious acceptance of one's own finitude and ignorance, i.e., the modesty to recognise that one does not know everything and thus is willing to open to what is 'other' and learn from others and what the past has to teach. Gadamer himself admits:

I myself remember how I disputed with an experienced scholar about an academic matter, which I claimed to know with certainty. He abruptly instructed me in my error on this issue and when I asked him, in a very embittered tone, "How do you know that?" his answer was: "When you are as old as I, you'll know it too." That was a correct answer. . . . Most of the time we cannot say why this or that philosophical or historical conjecture of a beginner is "impossible." It is a question of tact that is acquired through unrelenting interaction with the subject matter, but it cannot be taught and demonstrated.<sup>14</sup>

In the same way, when we engage a work of art, we must trust ourselves to the authority of the work of art. That is, we must be open to the idea that the artwork has something true to offer. The suspension of disbelief however does not suggest that we should be so foolish to keep our eyes entirely shut and accept openly everything that is given; rather in total contrast it proposes that we always keep both eyes opened, so that we are aware of what the artwork has to reveal while at the same time being suspicious of what it offers. Suspicion, here, is not a negative notion in any sense, for what it implies is caution and consideration balanced together with openness. One must, according to Gadamer, have the wisdom to question, reflect and evaluate all knowledge.

To summarise, the experience of art 'manifests' itself through dialogue between the beholder and the work of art. Through the interchange of question and answer, the 'manifestness' of art unfolds itself – that is, art discloses itself in its *selfsameness*. Once the play of art 'manifests' itself, its movement is independent of the viewer and the artwork itself. The experience of art moreover moves in a direction which viewer cannot foresee. The dialogue, which occurs in the experience of art, is what enables us to generate new thoughts. In the spontaneous act of utterance, new understandings modify, develop and deepen our previous understandings of the subject matter and so of ourselves. We come to

<sup>14</sup> 'Truth in the Human Sciences', op. cit., 28. See also 'Reflections on My Philosophical Journey', op. cit., 33.

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know the self in a different light. Conversation is the primordial convention by which we are transformed.

The constitution of aesthetic meaning is thus the amalgamation of the experiences of the beholder with the truth-content of the work of art itself. As such, the truth of a work of art is always relevant to the lives it speaks to. '[N]o text and no book speaks if it does not speak the language that reaches the other person' (TM 358 / WM 375). The task of the viewer then is to find the appropriate language of interpretation in order to listen to the work of art speak. In order to understand the meaning of a work of art, the audience has to apply the truth content the work of art imposes on them from the perspective of their own concerns and problems – this is the only approach available since we cannot detach ourselves from ourselves. Gadamer concludes:

Interpretation is probably, in a certain sense, re-creation, but this re-creation does not follow the process of the creative act, but the lines of the created work which has to be brought to representation in accord with the meaning the interpreter finds in it. (107 / 114)

According to Gadamer, works of art are representational in as much as they bring truth to light and reveal the essence of their subject matter to an audience. The essence is the essence of its audience and therefore it cannot be eternally the same but is rather relative to the different audiences. The truth-claim the work of art imposes on their audience cannot be specified outside the particular situation or circumstances in which the work of art is perceived. Therefore the work of art has no determined meaning in the sense E. D. Hirsch would impose, i.e. the intention of the author. Gadamer explains:

A claim [*Anspruch*] is something lasting. Its justification (or pretended justification) is the first thing. Because a claim continues, it can be affirmed at any time. A claim exists against someone and must therefore be asserted against him; but the concept of a claim also contains the idea that it is not itself a fixed demand, the fulfilment of which is agreed by both sides, but is, rather, the ground for such.

A claim is the legal foundation for an unspecified demand' (112 / 120).

Having examined thus far the nature of aesthetic experience by analogy of play, in the next section we shall investigate Gadamer's understanding of mimesis or imitation and how this concept is used to defend further the experience of truth in art.

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### § 4.3 Gadamer's Revival of the Theory of Mimesis

In the *Republic*, Plato condemns art, for it does not represent the ideal or the eternal forms but imitates only a secondary reality.<sup>15</sup> He therefore sees art as an imitation of an imitation, consequently, standing three times removed from reality and the truth. Plato asserts: 'The art of representation is therefore a long way removed from truth, and it is able to reproduce everything because it has little grasp of anything, and that little is of a mere phenomenal appearance.'<sup>16</sup> Gadamer, however, contends that this critique of art given by Plato is extremely ironic and dialectical, and he further explains that we need to reconsider our understanding of mimesis taught to us by the Classicism of the eighteenth century, which evidently accepted blindly Plato's assertions concerning art given in the *Republic*. In Gadamer's view, mimesis is simply the imitation or copy (*Abbild*) of something original, offering no cognitive knowledge of any kind. The notion of mimesis, as he sees it, embodies the meaning of 'representation' (*Darstellung*) and recognition in representation. He states:

... in the representation of art, recognition is operative, which has the character of genuine knowledge of essence, and since Plato considers all knowledge of being to be recognition, this is the ground of Aristotle's remark that poetry is more philosophical than history. Thus imitation, as representation, has a clear cognitive function. (TM 103 / WM 110).

This position is not too surprising, given that in his earlier elucidation of play, he asserts that art is 'representational' and that the experience of art or the aesthetic play is a form of self-representation. In claiming that art is representational, Gadamer, we recall, does not imply that the work of art necessarily constitutes a depiction of an actual event. He insists that modern paintings, for example Impressionism and Cubism, still remain mimetic although they avoid conventional representation of objects. Even when the representation does not perceptually mimic the natural world, we can nevertheless see in modern paintings a representation of the lifeworld. Gadamer explains:

We start from the position that the mode of being of the work of art is representation [*Darstellung*] and ask ourselves how the meaning of representation can be verified by what we call a picture [*Bild*]. Representation cannot here mean copying. We shall have to define the mode of being of the picture more exactly by

<sup>15</sup> See Plato. *The Republic* Part X. §1. (Trans. Desmond Lee. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Penguin, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, X. §1 598 b.

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distinguishing the way in which the representation is related to something that is original, from the relation of the copy to the original. (TM 122 / WM 131)

In distinguishing mimesis as copy (*Abbild*) of reality from mimesis as representation or the 'appearance of what is there' (121 / 131), Gadamer demonstrates that the concept of imitation neither needs to refer solely to the notion of reality 'in itself' nor that art exactly re-produces. He argues that although art represents an essence of the lifeworld, this aspect is not one that is apparent outside the work of art, i.e. the representation, itself. In his view the work of art is not merely a reproduction of reality that can be identified independently from the work of art and used to assess the adequacy of its re-presentation. 'The world which appears in the play of representation', he argues, 'does not stand like a copy next to the real world, but is the latter in the heightened truth of its being' (121 / 130). In other words, artistic representations do not provide an exact mirror of reality. What the artwork illuminates, as an expressive representation, is the particularly heightened experiences or events of life, while concurrently minimising the importance of other aspects of reality. Functioning as such, artistic representations disclose (as well as conceal) 'reality'. And reality, as Gadamer explains, is what is 'untransformed'. What is more, he claims that art is the raising up (*Aufhebung*) of that reality into its truth. Truth, as we have already examined, is an aspect of human experience or of being that has been given an emphasis and illuminated for all to witness. Gadamer's account of artistic truth is closely affiliated to the Heideggerian concept of truth as *alētheia* (unconcealment). As mentioned previously, with his literal translation of the Greek word *alētheia*, Heidegger triggered a profound reconsideration concerning the understanding of truth. If we recall, for Heidegger the meaning of truth cannot be fully exhausted by simply acknowledging it as the agreement or coherence of something to something, i.e. *Adequatio intellectus ad rem* – a definition that is commonly accepted as truth. To recognise something correctly or truthfully, Heidegger explains that 'the fact must show itself to be fact if knowledge and the proposition that forms and expresses knowledge are to be able to conform to the fact; otherwise the fact cannot become binding on the proposition'.<sup>17</sup> Truth in a sense is always identified with the degree of correctness. But in order to understand and to verify the correctness of a proposition, one really has to go back to something that is already evident. The starting

<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger: *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1995), p. 49. 'Damit jedoch das Erkennen und der die Erkenntnis ausformende und aussagende Satz sich der Sache anmessen kann, damit dem zu vor die Sache selbst für den Satz verbindlich werden kann, muß doch die Sache selbst sich als solche zeigen.' The English

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point, Heidegger contends, is the unconcealment of the being (*des Seienden*). Unconcealment, as it were, situates us in a condition of being that in representation, we always remain installed and in attendance upon an unconcealment. Thus he claims:

That which is can only be, as a being, if it stands within and stands out within what is lighted in this clearing. Only this clearing grants and guaranties to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are. Thanks to this clearing, beings are unconcealed in certain changing degrees.<sup>18</sup>

If artistic representations disclose the truth of reality, then, that truth is something which cannot be obvious or immediately intelligible. Truth is something which has to be revealed. The work of art, i.e. artistic representation, in essence provides a medium to show the truth by extricating its subject matter from that which it considers as nonessential while simultaneously revealing the most significant. Therefore artistic representation cannot be a mere copy or a repetition of the events of the 'real' world. That is, the work of art does not capture the world like it 'really' is or as it is. It is something different and yet still remains connected to the original in a quintessential sense. 'Hence representation remains limited in an essential sense to the original [*Ur-Bild*] that is represented in it' (TM 124 / WM 133).

Moreover, in representation there is also the 'transformatio' of human play into structure (*Verwandlung ins Gebilde*), i.e. into the truth of which the perfection of art consists. Gadamer uses the term 'transformation' deliberately instead of the term change since 'change' categorically implicates that the thing which is changing remains to a certain degree qualitatively the same. By employing the concept of transformation, however, Gadamer emphasises that the play becomes something completely new; it becomes *Gebilde* (a structure, i.e. a creation). With the transformation into *Gebilde*<sup>19</sup> the play attains 'the character of a work, of an *ergon* and not only of *energeia*' (TM 99 / WM 106). Therefore it has an independent and superior mode of being (*Seinsweise*), extricated from the contingency of the reality. Moreover, play transformed into *Gebilde* possesses an

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translation is found in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', *Philosophy of Art and Beauty*, (Edited by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns. The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 678.

<sup>18</sup> 'Das Seiende kann als Seiendes nur sein, wenn es in das Gelichtete dieser Lichtung hinein- und hinaussteht. Nur diese Lichtung schenkt und verbtirgt uns Menschen einen Durchgang zum Seienden, das wir selbst nicht sind, und den Zugang zu dem Seienden, das wir selbst sind.' *ibid.*, p. 51.; (trans.) pp. 679-80.

<sup>19</sup> From here on I will elect to use the German word *Ge-bilde* since this already implies that the work of art must be something which is *gebildet*, i.e. formed. The *Gebilde* is the result of the process of *Bild-ung*. Furthermore the German

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absolute autonomy over the performer, the audience and the creator, i.e. the artist himself. This autonomous mode of being (*Seinsweise*) of the play as *Gebilde* is, as Gadamer puts it, 'always realisation, sheer fulfilment, *energia* which has its telos within itself.' (101 / 108). In so far as it is *Gebilde*, it has its standard within itself and does not measure itself with anything external to it. In play the *Gebilde* unfolds itself as it is in its selfsameness, i.e. it brings into the open what is usually concealed and withdrawn. Hence, Gadamer concludes that a comparison of the work of art as *Gebilde* with reality as a strict standard of pictorial resemblance is not possible. The *Gebilde* is above all such comparison because it utters a 'superior' truth, i.e. the truth of being and not the coherence or correspondence of facts. The *Gebilde* is in itself a unified and self-contained whole. Through the *Gebilde*, a closed circle of meaning (*Sinnkreis*) is represented which one could not discover in 'daily' reality since reality is always seen in anticipation of the future, in which there lie undecided possibilities. Therefore reality does not allow the possibility to grasp completely the coherence of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*) since the future is always undetermined. In this regard, the *Gebilde* (work of art) seems to elevate beyond reality, in that it reveals knowledge and truth that is, under 'real' circumstances, unrecognisable. Through the work of art, we 're-cognise' and comprehend its truth because the represented subject matter in the work of art, transformed into the *Gebilde*, is freed from its contingency. The consequences and ramifications of the events represented are entirely contained within the boundaries of the *Gebilde*. Therefore the meaning of the subject matter takes on a certain structure and closure. 'We therefore see what the work of art has taught us to see, but this means that we cannot verify the representation by comparing it to an original because we already see the original in its light.'<sup>20</sup> In Gadamer's view the 'represented' is not simply 'there' in the world but is actualised through the artistic representation, i.e. 'it has in this way come to exist more fully (TM 103 / WM 109). This argument underlies a premise that we have to acknowledge the element of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) which is implicated in the concept of mimesis. Gadamer defines the nature of '*Erkenntnis*' of mimesis as 're-cognition' (*Wiedererkennung*).<sup>21</sup> He states:

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word permits associations with other forms of the word like *Bild*, *Bildung*, *gebildet*, which are not possible in the English translation.

<sup>20</sup> Warnke. op. cit., 59.

<sup>21</sup> Gadamer connects this cognitive function of art to Plato's account of *anamnesis* (remembrance). He argues that this Platonic idealism is already suggested in the phenomenon of recognition. 'The "known" enters into its true being and manifests itself as what it is only when it is recognised.' (TM 103 / WM 109) By considering all knowledge of being to be recognition, Plato provides the ground of Aristotle's remark that poetry is more philosophical than history. (Aristotle, Poetics 9, 1451 b 6)

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[T]he essence of imitation consists precisely in the recognition of the represented in the representation. A representation intends to be so true and convincing that we do not advert to the fact that what is so represented is not 'real'. Recognition as cognition of the true occurs through an act of identification in which we do not differentiate between the representation and the represented. . . . Recognising something means rather that I now cognise something *as* something that I have already seen. The enigma here lies entirely in the 'as'. I am not thinking of the miracle of memory, but of the miracle of knowledge that it implies. When I recognise someone or something, what I see is freed from the contingency of this or that moment of time. It is part of the process of recognition that we see things in terms of what is permanent and essential in them, unencumbered by the contingent circumstances in which they were seen before and are seen again.<sup>22</sup>

According to Gadamer, the phenomenon of mimesis is uniquely a primordial event, for its essences consist namely in 'recognition'. The concept of recognition implies that there is interpretation and understanding of something. What this means is that the mimetic, as representation (*Darstellung*), is itself the recognition of something as something as well as the object which should or ought to be recognised, i.e. understood, as something in itself. In art there is, we can say, a 'double recognition'. The first is the recognition and interpretation of being which the artist has experienced and captured, and the second event of recognition occurs in the viewer who sees or recognises in the representation the being which the art embodies. The mimetic and the aesthetic experiences, as we can see, are clearly forms of knowledge.

The work of art essentially teaches us to see or recognise and re-cognise the subject or content represented in terms of the truth it discloses. In picking out and emphasising certain features or aspects of life, artistic representations teach their audience more about the truth of being which previously was not apparent or understood. In fact, what the work of art does is to open up continuously other perspectives of an already familiar subject to the audience, albeit in a heightened form. When one engages an artwork, one sees something which is on one hand familiar and still on the other new and unknown. The meaning of recognition stands somehow, on Gadamer's view, between familiarity and newness. 'The joy of recognition', Gadamer states, 'is rather that more becomes known than is already known. In recognition what we know emerges, as if through an

<sup>22</sup> *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*. op. cit., 99.



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illumination, from all the chance and variable circumstances that condition it and is grasped in its essence' (TM 102 / WM 109). The work of art is not only representational but has also an educational and pedagogical function. The work of art represents its subject matter in such a way that the understanding of the audience is enhanced and refreshed with each new encounter. It always provokes a confrontation or rather a conversation with the audience, with their lives, since the audience experiences work of art as 'authoritative' and views its own world from a new perspective provided by the particular representation.

It [recognition] does not simply reveal the universal, the permanent form, stripped of all our contingent encounters with it. For it is also part of the process that we recognise ourselves as well. All recognition represents the experience of growing familiarity, and all our experiences of the world are ultimately ways in which we develop familiarity with that world. . . . All art of whatever kind is a form of recognition that serves to deepen our knowledge of ourselves and thus our familiarity with the world as well.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Gadamer already reverses the mimetic relation between the representation and what is presented (i.e. the original, *Ur-Bild*). He does not view the mimetic relationship as a single-sided issue, i.e. he does not recognise that representations, like the copies, point to something that is really existing outside itself. Gadamer emphasises the mutual dependency between the world and the world of art and he states: 'Without the mimesis of the work the world is not there as it is there in the work, and without reproduction the work is not there. Hence, in representation, the presence of what is represented is completed' (TM 121-22 / WM 131). A copy only wants to be seen 'as if' it were something which it resembles, the original (*Ur-Bild*), but a copy is just a repetition (*Wiedergabe*) of something and not something as something in itself. Furthermore, it does not have the function to provoke reflection, comparison and distinction. Its function exhausts itself simply in pointing to the original that it resembles. Its self-hood lies only in identification with something which itself is not, and it raises itself only in the sense that in its function it fulfils itself in its self-repeal (*Selbstaufhebung*). A picture on the contrary is not defined by its self-repeal. A picture does not function as a means to an end. The self-hood or meaning of a picture is self-contained, insofar as it is important how the representation is represented. This means that we are not simply led away from the picture to what is represented in the picture. The representation rather remains essentially connected to what

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is represented and belongs to it. Gadamer illustrates this 'connection' with the example of a mirror image. The picture in the mirror – we usually call image – depends on the presence of what stands in front of the mirror and therefore the mirrored picture exists only insofar as something is reflected. What is represented in the mirror and the object of that representation is inseparable. One cannot differentiate between the representation and what is represented. It is therefore the picture of the represented and not the picture of the mirror that is reflected. One can say in the end that the crucial difference between representation and copy lies in their different function. While a copy simply points to something with which it identifies, fulfilling its purpose in the act of self-repealing, a picture or representation meanwhile remains ontologically inseparable from the represented and therefore its intention lies in the original unity and 'non-differentiation' between representation and the represented.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

## Conclusion

Since the age of Enlightenment, the 'existential' question of the humanities and social sciences has been the question of truth; that is to say, can the human sciences claim truth? If we follow the traditional line of thinking and claim that the criterion of truth is the absolute 'correspondence' or 'coherence' of some given thing to some given other, then the human sciences must concede that they do not possess truth. One explanation is obviously due to the reason that there is no such thing as a 'given' in the human sciences and so no archimedean point or standard position from which to evaluate the subject of the human sciences or a fixed end-point to which an evaluation can arrive. If we examine the language of the human sciences, we can see that nearly every concept bears multiple meanings. A simple example is the concept of *happiness*. We know, or rather we have a sense of what it means to be happy or to have happiness but to define it as it is in its *selfsameness*, is an unrealisable task. Whatever definition we give to it is merely an artificial explication which attempts to describe, as close as possible, its true essence. Concepts which belong to the human sciences are expressive more so than explanatory, and they always open to further elucidation and interpretation. As such what is 'given' in the language of the human sciences, in a manner of speaking, is then simply the continuous development of concepts which constantly grow in their meaningfulness. This, of course, makes all attempts to condense them into a univocal absolute impossible. This consequently means that there is no way of generating 'absolute agreements' in the human sciences. The only disciplines which can generate or uncover the corresponding certainties of 'given' things are the modern or natural sciences. This is strictly due to the language and method which they utilise. As we mentioned previously in this thesis, the modern sciences employ a unique system of 'sign language' that enables them to transform concepts into a specific sign, i.e. words are 'given' an exact designation, which when processed or tested by the method of induction or deduction, the 'agreement' of something given to some other given can be determined. The static and 'closed' nature of scientific concepts, together with scientific method, is what allows the modern sciences to discover the pre-existent absolutes or the cosmic order of the natural world.

Hence, if we determine that truth is the absolute 'agreement' of something to another, then it becomes solely discoverable through the method of modern sciences. And this naturally leaves the human sciences, as they say, 'in the cold' or more precisely in relativism. However, as we have discovered, for Gadamer the concept of truth is not

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merely the perfect and unchanging agreement of something to something or the experience of truth something which can be delimited to the natural sciences. In his view, there are experiences of truth which transcend the sphere of the control of scientific method.<sup>1</sup> But to discover such truth(s), he argues one has to reconceptualise the meaning of truth. According to him, prior to all understandings of truth as correspondence or coherence, truth is unconcealment or disclosure. This recognition of truth as unconcealment is of course the adoption of Martin Heidegger's ontological and phenomenological definition of truth as *aletheia*, given in *Being and Time*.<sup>2</sup> *Aletheia*, as I elucidated in Chapter I, is what the ancient Greeks understood as unhiddenness, i.e., the self-presentation of being or the uncovering-of-self as it is in itself. It is the hermeneutical understanding of truth, which is phenomenological and less correspondence.

Heidegger's revival of *aletheia*, as it were, emancipated the human sciences from its artificial comparison with the modern sciences and offered Gadamer a new way of conceiving the human sciences. The relationship between 'truth' and 'method', which was advocated by the Romantic tradition of Schleiermacher and sustained by the 'geisteswissenschaftliche' hermeneutics of Dilthey, is rejected by Gadamer in favour of the ontological and phenomenological understanding of truth as revealed by 'hermeneutics of facticity'. This is first demonstrated through the exposition of the guiding humanistic concepts.

If we recall, the concepts *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgement and taste all represent not only a mode of knowing but also of being. These concepts, we discovered, represent a tradition through which we acquire 'practical' and 'common' knowledge concerning the idea of a moral-political being. According to Gadamer, concepts such as *Bildung* help us to reach out and discover the 'otherness' while simultaneously modifying and cultivating one's moral and social being. However, the knowledge and understanding one gains by way of the humanistic concepts cannot be learned either by instruction or through any scientific system, but only acquired through concrete practice. In other words, knowledge of this kind transcends the boundaries of method. For instance, knowing what is good judgment cannot be grasped through scientific method, in that, first of all, an absolute

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<sup>1</sup> TM xii / WM xxviii

<sup>2</sup> If we recall, Heidegger establishes the priority of the truth of 'Dasein' over the concept of truth as certainty in *Sein und Zeit*. Refer to Chapter I, § 2. 4.

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judgment does not exist. Judgment is not a rule that can be processed through method. It rather has the character of sense or intuition, which one has to develop through its practical use. Seeing things from right and sound points of view, i.e. judging, requires practice and letting every instance or use of judgment *shows itself* as being either right or wrong, good or bad. It is only through continuous experience that one comes to discover the meaning of 'sound judgement'. Experience in this sense is the unconcealing of judgement. Every experience of judgment discloses a sense of understanding.

In the same way, the *Geisteswissenschaften* also render knowledge and understanding which cannot be logically uncovered, but only disclosed through concrete practice, that is, through the concrete practice of conversation. In every aesthetic experience, e.g. listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, watching Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or looking at a water lily painting by Monet, Gadamer contends that there is a play which occurs between the object and its audience. But this aesthetic play, he explains is not subjective, neither as in the Kantian notion of 'free play' of imagination and understanding nor as according to Schiller's notion 'play impulse' (*Spieltrieb*), but a dialectical and dynamic event, wherein a 'fusion of horizons' transpires. In his view, every 'serious' encounter with a work of art leads to a genuine conversation – albeit a metaphorical dialogue – between the work of art and its beholder, effectively provoking questions, which when answered opens to further questioning – akin to Socratic dialectic. The movement of this conversation, Gadamer believes, is autonomous, and yet its existence depends on the viewer. As the conversation unfolds so too does the experience of art, i.e. the event in which the self-presentation of being discloses itself. In simpler terms, the truth of art or the expression of being unconceals itself. But this is not to suggest that the whole truth, i.e. complete unconcealment, unfolds in the experience of art. As it were, we never 'see the whole picture'. The reason for this is that hermeneutical truth is manifest and concurrently obscure; it is both unconcealment and hiddenness. The unconcealment of being is an endless process; a 'bad infinite' as Gadamer calls it. Coupled with the fact that we are finite beings, the character of hermeneutical truth as disclosure and hiddenness unfortunately permits us to discover only a limited 'profile' of truth. 'All human speaking', Gadamer explains, 'is finite in such a way that there is within it an infinity of meaning to be elaborated and interpreted. That is why the hermeneutical phenomenon also can be illuminated only in the light of this fundamental finitude of being, which is wholly linguistic in character' (TM

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416 / WM 434). Thus, with each new encounter with a work of art, whether it is the same work or something new, a new or different conversation evolves, and we discover something wholly new (and yet at the same time it is something very familiar). This however does not imply nor guarantee that one necessarily will change ones position with each new experience. In fact one may maintain the same position with every encounter, but that position will always be differently developed than the one with which one began.

Gadamer's elucidation of the experience of art serves as a paradigm for all the hermeneutic disciplines. It shows that we must overcome and transcend the false aesthetic consciousness, originating with Kant, which distorts hermeneutic truth. Rather than abstracting art from the lifeworld, and separating it from ourselves, we must instead become in a sense 'one' with the art through dialogue, through language. In every encounter with music, history, literature or philosophy, we communicate and engage in a conversation, asking questions while concurrently being open to questions ourselves. What is more, such experiences require one to listen attentively to language which the music or novel speaks. But every experience is a different experience; consequently, we always add to our understanding not necessarily something qualitatively better but something different, something more, i.e., a new perspective. But is this so different from the natural sciences? Have they discovered or rather uncovered absolutely everything? The answer is obviously no. The natural sciences are far from unconcealing all there is to know. Hence, they too only possess a limited profile of truth. Of course, the discoveries of certainties are possible in the natural sciences. Theorems, for instance, are unchanging. But every theorem is the product of an existing theorem and has therefore some relation to another theorem, creating a giant web or a tree of theorems, which remains incomplete. This seems to parallel the meaningfulness of concepts – concepts that belong to the human sciences of course. If we recall the concept of *happiness*, this term also possesses a wealth of meaningfulness that creates a web of meanings, which, like the web of theorems, remains incomplete. As new theorems are discovered, the web of theorems enlarges; likewise, as new ideas of happiness unconceal themselves, the concept also further expands.

Thus, the question of natural sciences, like the question of human sciences, is a question of discovery. Both the natural sciences and the human sciences seek to understand: the former search for understanding of the outer world while the latter pursues understanding for the inner world, the being of human beings. In both instances, the

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hermeneutic experience of knowing leads to further knowing. The commonness in both fields of study is that all phenomena of understanding eventually lead to self-understanding.

In concluding, the first major section of *Truth and Method* we can summarise as Gadamer's attempt to demonstrate a concept of truth which is not restricted or limited to the narrow concept of scientific truth or to the truth of matter of facts (*Tatsachemwahrheit*). He does this first by introducing the humanistic concepts, which demonstrate knowledge that can neither be denied nor minimised as 'lesser' knowledge or subjective knowledge. This is followed by the experience of art. Gadamer essentially determines the ontology of the work of art through the model of 'play'. This model serves as the elaboration of a non-subjectivistic concept of art, which does not reduce the value of the artwork through an overvaluing of the perceiver's respond. In connection with the concept of play, Gadamer also show how the concept of mimesis has been misunderstood, and sets out to demonstrate the fundamental differences between copy and representation and recognition in reprcsentation. In this regard I have tried to clarify Gadamer's intention to overcome the Kantian notion of aesthetic experience (*Erlebnisästhetik*) and consequently how we should reconsider the meaning of aesthetic autonomy, i.e. the autonomy of art.

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